THE FLUCTUATING NATURE OF OTHERNESS

An Oral History Study on Identity Construction Amongst Latin Americans in Finland

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Tiivistelmä/Referat – Abstract

This research explores manifestations and negotiations of Otherness in the life stories of six adults who moved to Finland from Latin American countries as children. Throughout oral history, the purpose is to highlight the individuality of the migration process, emphasising the importance of looking at personal experiences and narratives. Otherness is understood in the research as a key factor in the migration process, by which the individual feels displaced and 'otherised' in the new environment due to a complex combination of circumstances. The research questions explore how materialisations of Otherness affected greatly the identity construction of the narrators. Otherness is thus approached through a timeline perspective; the narratives are examined with special attention to accounts of Otherness as children, and accounts of Otherness that manifest currently as adults. The research also explores why, when looking at migration processes, an intersectional approach is welcomed and relevant, since the category "immigrant" can neither be understood as homogeneous, nor isolated from other identities in life.

The narrators moved to Finland between 1989 and 1999, in a decade that was crucial for Finland regarding immigration arrival numbers and policies. The thesis is informed by this: the fact that Finland witnessed increased immigrant arrivals and asylum seeking petitions during the 1990s, did not translate in abundant arrivals from Latin America, as it was the case with countries from other regions. Therefore, the narrators did not have ample representation or a proper diaspora community to ease their identity construction process and their migration journey in general. This is why research on Latin Americans in Finland is not only important but also necessary and interesting: they can be considered "a minority within a minority", relatively invisible and scarcely researched.

An oral history perspective when approaching Otherness is also justified and pertinent. With the use of narrative analysis, the interviews reveal in detail how Otherness does not disappear with the passage of time, but instead transforms in its materialisations and overall nature. Simultaneously, narrators also develop different negotiation mechanisms, and even incorporate Otherness to their own identity. Finally, the thesis links how these first-person narratives examined can inform future policy making: the thesis proposes that looking in detail at individual stories can contribute to the development of integration practices that would be more attuned to both migration processes and to the need of involving the native population in the two-way integration endeavour.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Oral recollections of migration experiences are rich in particularities and intersections. Throughout the 1990s, in a Finnish sociopolitical context that was beginning to understand immigration and integration practices[1], the six narrators of this thesis moved to Finland from Latin American countries[2] as children. They embarked in a process of identity building that was informed by the dichotomy Finland/Latin America, by how the majority perceived them, and by how they perceived this new home. Within this process, Otherness was at the centre, because its presence steamed from every direction: the inner feeling of not belonging, the constant reminder from others on how different they were, and the lack of representation at a bigger level in a country that received almost 142,000 immigrants during the decade, out of which only 1167 were Latin Americans[3].

Through a comprehensive exercise of oral history, this thesis examines how Otherness permeates identity construction processes, and how it fluctuates in its manifestations and negotiations depending on time, context, and personal dynamics. The aim is as well to highlight how Otherness experiences are greatly individual, just as much as the mechanisms developed to cope with it. With this, the thesis attempts at lifting personal stories to the spotlight, emphasising the need for searching singularities in the migration process: the experience in itself, the category "immigrant", and consequently the acculturation outcomes, are highly unique and should not be homogenised in integration practices and policies.

This understanding of individuality is more than ever necessary. Although the events of this thesis have taken place during the last twenty years, the tension resulting from

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[1] Outi Lepola, "Ulkomaalaiseksi suomenmaalaiseksi: monikulttuurisuus, kansalaisuus, ja suomalaisuus 1990-luvun maahanmuuttopoliittisessa keskustelussa" (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2000).

[2] Geographically speaking, and for the purpose of clarity, this thesis understand Latin America as being comprised by Mexico, Central American countries, and South American countries; namely those countries in where Latin languages are spoken. See for example Michel Gobat, "The Invention of Latin America: A Transnational History of Anti-Imperialism, Democracy, and Race", *American Historical Review,* 118 no. 5 (2013): 1345-1375.

[3] "Immigration and emigration by nationality, origin, and language, 1990-1999", Statistics Finland's Database, accessed July 4, 2019, http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__muutl/statfin_muutl_pxt_11a8.px/table/tableViewLayout1/.

contact between foreigners and locals is very central to the social climate that Europe is facing currently, with immigration constantly rising[4]. Particularly for Finland, the country has historically shown a slightly different story regarding immigrant arrivals to the country, one that is constantly repeated: Finland is always presented as an emigration country until the 1970s, having become a shy receiver of immigrants from the 1990s onwards, mostly from Estonia and Russia[5]. Asylum seekers were (with the exception of the 1970s Chileans) mostly from Somalia and the USSR[6], arriving not in high numbers (let alone waves). Because in recent years the country has been "shaken" with a dramatic increase of immigrants and asylum seekers[7], it is argued that Finland's integration policy has shifted from "assimilationist" to "integrationist"[8], in an attempt to give space for home cultures to be preserved while coexisting with the Finnish culture; this transformation running parallel to the raise of Finland's far-right discourse[9]. These contradictory realities make a life in the new home more challenging to navigate. It is, therefore, fundamental to understand, through first-person narratives, how Otherness is crafted in daily live and actions, and how in general, migration processes are heterogeneous and deserve more complex care.

1.1 Research questions and aims

Before conducting the interviews there were many potential questions that related to finding commonalities in Latin American immigrants' memories: key pieces of their lives that had survived the passage of time and that could bring light on the different

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[4] OECD, "Is Migration Really Increasing", *Migration Policy Debates,* 2014.

[5] "Immigration and emigration by nationality, origin, and language, 1990-2017", Statistics Finland's Database, accessed October 3, 2017, http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__muutl/statfin_muutl_pxt_11a8.px/.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Immigration arrivals experienced a "historical high" from 2011 to 2012, for example. OECD, "Is Migration Really Increasing", *Migration Policy Debates,* 3.

[8] Kaija Matinheikki-Kokko, "Pakolaisten vastaanotto ja hyvinvoinnin turvaaminen Suomessa", S*osiaali- ja terveyshallituksen raportti nro. 40* (1991), quoted in Jean S. Phinney et al., "Ethnic Identity, Immigration, and Well-Being: An Interactional Perspective", *Journal of Social Issues* 57 no. 3 (2001): 499.

[9] Suvi Keskinen, "Antifeminism and White Identity Politics: Political antagonisms in radical right-wing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland", *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3 no. 4 (2013): 227.

strategies used for acculturation[10]. For this, two pilot interviews were conducted; the purpose here being to explore these commonalities and to test the open-ended way of interviewing. In both interviews, however, Otherness and experiences of being "*Othered"* were unequivocally brought up as a part of every single aspect of their lives and upbringing in Finland[11]. Even more relevant was the effect that experiencing Otherness and dealing with it had in defining who they are. Their experiences were prioritised over the researcher's initial questions, and Otherness became the main element of research. Once the interviews were completed and analysis was being conducted, it can be said that the material "spoke" again: it highlighted the fact that even though the research was concerned primarily with their migrant identities, other identities kept surfacing throughout the conversations, up to the point that it was evident that they were inseparable from each other. Consequently, the thesis answers to a primary research question, in where manifestations and negotiations of Otherness become the centre, and to a secondary research question, that through examples, proposes the relevance of an intersectional approach when studying Otherness.

In response to the multiple dimensions and sides that the interviews brought on the reality of the migration experience, and taking into account the main principle of oral history, which is to tend to the voice of the narrators, the research questions are:

1. How has Otherness appeared in the daily life of the narrators and how has it been negotiated when constructing a coherent self-narrative?
2. Why is an intersectional approach relevant when looking at Otherness in immigrants?

With these questions in mind, the aim of the thesis is threefold: (a) to bring forward the complexity of the migration experience in first-person narratives, (b) to shed light on the history of Latin Americans in Finland, a "minority within a minority", and (c) to

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[10] The thesis' understanding on acculturation is informed by a postcolonial approach, in where acculturation is understood as the formation of immigrant identities that "involves a constant process of negotiation, intervention and mediation that is shaped by issues of race, gender, sexuality, and power". Sunil Bhatia. "Acculturation, Dialogical Voices and the Construction of the Diasporic Self", *Theory and Psychology* 12 no. 1 (2002): 59.

[11] This will be explored further in section 4.1, which recounts in detail the process of analysis.

demonstrate how “immigrant” is more than a homogeneous category and an isolated identity.

Structure

The thesis is divided into six big sections; these in turn are separated into smaller sections. The **Introduction** presents the main elements that need to be well understood before proceeding to read the thesis: the research questions and aims, and the previous research on the topic. The **Sociopolitical context of the research** positions the thesis’ events within a specific time, place and context that affected the migration journey of the narrators: it briefs over Finland as a destination for immigrants, and it gives light on Latin American immigration in Finland. The third section, **Theoretical Background**, offers a solid theoretical framework in where the main concepts of the analysis are reviewed: Otherness, Ethnic Identity, Family Relations in Migration, and Intersectionality. The fourth section, **Methodology,** reviews in detail key aspects of the interviewing process, assesses potential shortcomings, oral history as the method of study, and narrative inquiry as the choice for analysing the data. The fifth section, **Analysis,** answers the research questions in three parts. Both 'Otherness in childhood’ and ‘Otherness in adulthood’ answer the first research question; ‘Otherness and intersectionality’ answers the second research question. Finally, the sixth section, **Conclusion**, summarises the findings and offers reflections on how the analysis can be used for finding new directions on integration practices in Finland.

1.2 Previous research on the topic

There is abundant research on the acculturation of immigrants in Finland. A significant part of those that focus on specific ethnic immigrant groups concentrate on the most

dominant ones in the Finnish landscape, namely Russian immigrants[12], Somalis[13], or Estonians[14]. These researches provide an important background when looking at different angles of the migration experience within a Finnish context. Added to this, and in particular for this thesis, Sirkku Varjonen's doctoral research (2013) proved to be immensely useful in learning about the Finnish context regarding immigration, and in framing important concepts that open up a comprehensive theoretical background. Her dissertation focuses on the identity construction of thirty-four immigrants, analysed throughout their own narratives (in this case written)[15]. Outi Lepola's research (2000) is another relevant doctoral dissertation[16] on the topic, as it explores further the socio-political context. This work allows to understand both Finland's immigration policies, and attitudes towards multiculturalism within a specific time frame (the 1990s) that is particularly useful for this thesis. Research in Finland that touches specifically on the theme of Otherness in migrants is extensive, yet it has focused on the issue of

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[12] See for example Inga Jasinskaja-Lahti and Karmela Liebkind, "Perceived discrimination and psychological adjustment among Russian-speaking immigrant adolescents in Finland", *International Journal of Psychology,* 36 no. 3 (2001): 174-185; Inga Jasinskaja-Lahti, "On a Way Toward Integration. Russian-Speaking Immigrant Adolescents in Finland", *Siirtolaisuus – Migration*, 3 (2000): 3–17; or Ismo Söderling, "Venäjänkieliset Suomessa – yhdessä vai erikseen Suomea rakentamaan?", in *Venäjänkieliset Suomessa: huomiset suomalaiset*, ed. Arno Tanner & Ismo Söderling (Turku: Siirtolaisuusinstituutti, 2016), 9–16, among many others.

[13] See for example Anne Alitolppa-Niitamo, "Integroitumisen vaikeus: somalialaiset pakolaiset tarkastelun kohteena", in *Meikäläisiä muukalaisia: kulttuurien kohtaaminen käytännössä,* ed. Anna-Maria Åström, (Helsinki: Suomen kansantieteilijöiden yhdistys Ethnos ry, 1995), 29–36; Abdisatar Gelle, "Suomensomalialaisten nuorten sisu", in *Iska warran - mitä kuuluu? Somalialaisdiaspora meillä ja muualla*, ed. Päivi Armila, Tiina Sotkasiira, Ville- Samuli Haverinen (Itä-suomen yliopisto. Publications of the University of Eastern Finland. Reports and Studies in Social Sciences and Business Studies 9, 2016), 15-17; or Helena Oikarinen-Jabai, "Suomensomalialaiset nuoret paikantumisiaan tutkimassa", *Nuorisotutkimus* 1–2, 40-53, 2017, among many others.

[14] See for example Heli Hyvönen, "Leaving home behind -career opportunity or seeking for a safer life? A study of Finnish and Estonian migrant women's experiences of immigration", *Finnish Yearbook of Population Research* 42 (2009), 129-159., or Rolle Alho, "Virolaiset pääkaupunkiseudun työmarkkinoilla", in *Totta toinen puoli? Työperäisen maahanmuuton todellisen ja kuvitellut kipupisteet,* ed. Mika Helander, (Helsinki: Svenska social -och kommunalhöhskolan, 2011), 119-122, among many others.

[15] Sirkku Varjonen, "Ulkopuolinen tai osallistuja? Identiteetit, ryhmäsuhteet ja integraatio maahanmuuttajien elämäntarinoissa" (PhD. diss., University of Helsinki, 2013).

[16] Outi Lepola, "Ulkomaalaiseksi suomenmaalaiseksi".

representation and Otherising practices in media[17], or in Otherness in the school place[18]. This presents a niche for investigating Otherness from a personal point of view. This thesis contributes to the field by providing an analysis in this area.

For approaching immigration through oral history, The Oral History Reader[19] serves as a background for understanding the discipline in a comprehensive way. In this collection of essays, historians such as Alessandro Portelli make contributions on explaining the small nuances of working with oral history, while also providing advice for noticing information that would be otherwise overlooked. The essays on "Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History[20]" delve deeper into the methodology and principles to which oral history abides; a feminist perspective allows to redefine the position of the research, and also opens up questions about privilege and subjectivity. Finally, the concept of time proposed by Petri Hautaniemi has been fundamental in this research, for it helps in understanding the relevance of time in constructing personal narratives, justifying the division of the analysis in past and present.

> "Time – as a mark of a person's relation to roots and history (…) as well as to the present and the future – has special meaning in immigrant's lives. Besides being constructed by a complex set of social relations, young immigrants' membership experiences are constructed by a dialogue between past and current conditions. The notion of time, as a consumed aspect of our lives, does not turn into comprehensive order unless it is not told and remembered, shared with

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17 See for example Pentti Raittila, "Representations of Otherness in Finnish Culture. Media Images of Russians and Estonians", in *News of the Other - Tracing Identity in Scandinavian Constructions of the Eastern Baltic Sea Region,* ed. Kristina Riegert, (Göteborg, Nordicom, 2004); Pentti Raittila, "Auttaako uutisten dialogisuus toiseuden poistamisessa?", in *Etnisyyttä, rasismia ja dialogia sanomalehdissä ja Internetissä*., ed. Pentti Raittila, (Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto, tiedotusopin laitos, 2005), or Jarkko Wickström, "Maahanmuttajan Muotokuva: Etninen Toiseus Lehtikuvissa", Master's Thesis., University of Tampere, 2013; among many others.

18 See for example Mirja-Tytti Talib, *Toiseuden kohtaaminen koulussa: opettajien uskomuksia maahanmuuttajaoppilaista (*Helsinki: Helsingin yliopiston opettajankoulutuslaitos, 1999); or Silja Niittymäki, "Kokemuksia kulttuurisesta toiseudesta koulun arjessa: Maahanmuuttajaopiskelijoiden kokemukset opiskelusta suomalaisessa ammatillisessa koulutuksessa", Master's Thesis, University of Eastern Finland, 2012; among others.

19 Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (ed.), *The Oral History Reader*. (London and NY: Routledge, 2008).

20 Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (ed.), *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History.* (London and NY: Routledge, 1991).

someone in some context”[21] .

Finally, research on Latin Americans in Finland, and specifically on their history, is relatively scarce or “hidden” among more general works that concern bigger ethnic groups. “Kahvi, Pahvi, ja Tango: Suomen ja Latinalaisen Amerikan Suhteet”[22], although focused in unraveling the history of relations between Finland and Latin America, also offers valuable insight (along with first-person testimonials) on Latin American migrants living in Finland. Other research has been concerned with the experiences of Chilean refugees during the 1980s[23]. A historical approach into an increasingly growing community seemed not only relevant but necessary. Lastly, although in a complete different setting, North American studies have researched Latin American families for decades now, due to the vast presence of Latino migrants in the United States. From this, processes of migration in Latin American families can be extracted for background knowledge, as well as concepts of Latin American idiosyncrasy that are helpful when framing some of the ideas extracted from the interviews[24].

In summary, the topic of the thesis is relevant and justified because of two main reasons: (1) it expands on the research field of Latin Americans in Finland, and (2) it contributes to the field of research on Otherness from first-person narratives by understanding migration processes as unique and treating them as such. Finally, it establishes a relation between the complexity of migration processes and current integration practices, which opens a window for informing and improving policy-making in the integration sector.

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[21] Petri Hautaniemi, *Pojat!: Somalipoikien kiistanalaiinen nuoruus Suomessa* (Helsinki, Nuorisotutkimusverkosto / Nuorisotutkimusseura, 2004): 7, quoted in Pirkko Pitkänen and Satu Kouki, “Meeting foreign cultures: A survey of the attitudes of Finnish authorities towards immigrants and immigration”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28 no. 1 (2002): 108.

[22] Jussi Pakkasvirta and Jukka Aronen, *Kahvi, Pahvi ja Tango: Suomen ja Latinalaisen Amerikan Suhteet. (*Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 1998).

[23] Tuija Niemelä. *Chilen Pakolaisten Sopeutuminen Suomeen. (*Helsinki: Työvoimaministerio, 1980).

[24] Carola Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, *Children of Immigration.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

2. SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

2.1 Finland as an immigrant's destination

The families of this research arrived to Finland during the 1990s, between 1989 and 1999. The decision-making processes that granted them permanent residence, as well as tools and services to develop a life here, were informed by policies and laws that had been proposed and discussed throughout the whole decade[25]. Therefore, in order to provide a solid understanding to what the families encountered at their arrival, this section will review Finland's relation with immigration during the 1990s. Before proceeding, it is important to make a theoretical distinction between asylum seeker and immigrant, since the narrators fall under both of these categories. In general, one is distinguished from the other in regards to how voluntary the departure is: the migration process for an immigrant "is an enterprise that is often carefully planned and never taken lightly"[26], whereas "asylum seekers are those escaping a country because of, in the words of the Geneva Convention of 1951, 'a well-founded fear of persecution'"[27]. However, neither of these categories can be understood as "homogeneous", since motivations for moving, socio-economic status, or internal family dynamics, vary greatly depending on the individual case[28].

The main sources used for this section are the Statistics Finland's data, the statistics provided by the Finnish Immigration Service, and Outi Lepola's "Ulkomaalaisesta suomenmaalaiseksi"[29], which has been described above. Statistics Finland is a Finnish public authority that includes in its data only people who live permanently in Finland[30]. Because of this, these statistics cannot be compared with the ones provided by the

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[25] See for example Lepola, "Ulkomaalaiseksi suomenmaalaiseksi".

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 25.

[28] Carmela Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco. *Children of Immigration* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 2001), 20.

[29] Lepola, "Ulkomaalaiseksi suomenmaalaiseksi".

[30] Maija Maronen (Information Service Officer), email correspondence with author, October 1, 2017. The service bases its population statistics on the Population Information System maintained by the Population Register Centre.

Finnish Immigration Service on asylum seeking, since often there can be delays in the processing of information. For example: if a person applied for asylum on 1990 and their permanent residence permit was granted on 1992, they will appear in the population statistics of 1992, even though they arrived on 1990. Regardless of this, the thesis takes both data into account, since the aim here is not precision in terms of exact years and numbers, but to rather give an overall impression of the rising figures of arrivals.

In Finnish history, the beginning of the 1990s was a turning point in regards to immigration. Before 1990, the country witnessed in good measure departures, especially to Sweden and to the United States[31]. With the turn of the decade, both the collapse of the Soviet Union and the increasingly close relation between Finland and European entities (European Union, European Council) caused a change in tides[32]. Arrivals started to be more prominent than before. Specifically, regarding asylum seekers' arrivals, Finland had only received a small number form Chile during the 1970s, but the worsened situation in South-Eastern Asia and Former Yugoslavia made Finland again an asylum destination[33]. This distinct and almost sudden change in migration trends caused that "immigration to Finland "has been consistently equaled to something "new", this is, alien to the country's identity, unlike many other countries in Europe. "Our country has been traditionally a country of emigration"[34] has become a recurrent statement when speaking about immigration, both in formal and informal conversations. National minorities have been excluded from the conversation as well, this resulting both in (a) a false understanding of the cultural reality of the country and the coexistence of other

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[31] Anne Alitolppa-Niitamo and Ismo Söderling, *Olemme muuttaneet: Näkokulmia maahanmuuttoon, perheiden kotoutumiseen ammattilisen työn käytäntoihin* (Helsinki: Väestöntutkimuslaitos ja kotipuu, 2005), 5.

[32] Lepola, "Ulkomaalaiseksi suomenmaalaiseksi", 44.

[33] Ibid., 46-49.

34 See for example Alitolppa-Niitamo and Söderlin, "Olemme muuttaneet", 7; Jasinskaja-Lahti and Liebkind, "Perceived discrimination and psychological adjustment", 176.

minorities before 1990, and (b) a distant relation between Finland and its immigrants[35]. Immigration to Finland grew during the decade, with a peak in 1991. For asylum seeking petitions, asylum seekers' applications were in the thousands for the period of 1990-1994, followed by a slight drop in the following years. Numbers rose again in 1999, with a total of 3106 applications for asylum, a number that marked the start of a rising trend[36].

	IMMIGRATION TO FINLAND				
	1990	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**1998**
USSR	1885	132	1901*	2012*	2463*
Estonia	4	2134	1361	690	675
Sweden	754	567	551	644	799
Somalia	34	329	474	295	360
	ASYLUM SEEKING PETITIONS				
	1990	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**1998**
Somalia	1441	171	177	140	135
URSS	195	809	184*	63*	65
Yugoslavia	183	1868	68	47	348
Iraq	13	147	55	72	84

TABLE 1. IMMIGRANT ARRIVALS AND ASYLUM SEEKING PETITIONS FROM 1990-1998[37].

[35] Researcher Laura Huttunen points out that if Finnish culture would have been understood as diverse to begin with, it would have been perhaps easier to come to terms with the increasing flow of immigrants in the 1990s. "Etnisyys: Luokittelusysteemejä ja elettyä yhteisöllisyyttä", in *Suomalainen vieraskirja: Kuinka käsitellä monikulttuurisuutta,* ed. Anna Rastas, Laura Huttunen and Olli Löytty, (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2005), 182, quoted in Mia Komppa, "Rasismi Suomalaisessa Arjessa", Master's Thesis, University of Helsinki, 2008, 24.

[36] Statistics Finland's Database, "Immigration and emigration by nationality, origin, and language, 1990-2017".

[37] The numbers marked with a (*) correspond to statistics of arrivals both from the Former Soviet Union and the Russian Federation combined.

The table above[38] shows the countries with the biggest numbers of arrivals for the decade, outlining as well asylum-seeking petitions. The table also illustrates a perception that few of the narrators shared during their interviews. They recounted positioning themselves, already as children, within an imagined scale of Otherness. They expressed that their "integration" experience felt somehow different than the children who had a different ethnic background: they came indeed from "very far", and therefore did not recognise the overall closeness as "someone coming from Sweden", yet at the same time they felt "closer" to Finland than other cultures, like Iraq, Syria, or Somalia. They also expressed awareness on the possibility of other migrants (from other countries) having it "more difficult" than them, if only because of a darker skin colour, or because of their religion.

> Here if you speak Spanish or French they like you, if you speak Arabic or an African language it's weirder, they don't seem to like you that much. (Vera)

> A Somalian for instance, you don't think he came here cause he's an engineer, I mean, you see him and you think 'he's eating my money'. A Finnish person won't think 'he *might* be a refugee', they'll think 'he *is* a refugee'. (Rosa)

These perceptions are the result of the Finnish social reality for that period. Magdalena Jaakkola (1999), studying Finnish attitudes regarding ethnicity, found out that as a matter of fact, the more salient the external differences between Finns and immigrants were, the more they seemed to give way to higher negative perceptions towards them[39]. More specifically, she points out that the attitude towards newcomers from Somalia, and other immigrants from the Middle-East, was explicitly less friendly than towards other immigrant groups[40]. The numbers in the table support the narrators' claims as well. The highest arrivals throughout the decade belong to countries that can be grouped into three

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[38] "Migration by Nationality, Year, Language, Origin, Sex, and Information", Statistics Finland's Database, accessed July 30, 2019, http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__muutl/statfin_muutl_pxt_11a8.px/table/tableViewLayout1/. Asylum seeking petitions data, retrieved from Ari Keränen (Planning Officer for Statistic Services), email correspondence on September 27, 2017.

39 Magdalena Jaakkola, *Maahanmuutto ja etniset asenteet : suomalaisten suhtautuminen maahanmuuttajiin 1987-1999*. (Helsinki: Työministeriö, 1999), 12.

[40] Magdalena Jaakkola (2009); quoted in Mari Toivanen, "The ethnic neighbourhood: A locus of empowerment for elderly immigrants." *International Social Work* 45 no. 3 (2002): 28.

distinctive categories of Others[41]: Estonia and Russia (or the former Soviet Union) constitute the first group, with more than 35.000 immigrants arriving to Finland during the decade. Both countries are geographically close and easily recognisable, yet their relation with Finland has been complex[42]. Countries that are somewhat close to Finland, both geographically but this time also culturally, constitute the second group: Sweden, Germany, UK. From these, during the decade Finland received more than 10.000 people. The third group is constituted by Somalia, Former Yugoslavia, and Irak. They are both geographically and culturally far. Almost 9000 immigrants arrived between 1990 and 1999 from this last group. On the other hand, just as a comparison, the table below shows immigrant arrivals and asylum seeking petitions during the decade from Colombia, Chile, Peru, and México, the Latin American countries where the narrators came from. A shy total of 556 people arrived during the decade. Where could they position themselves then, if not in a minority within a minority?

	ASYLUM SEEKING PETITIONS				
	1990	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**1998**
Colombia	0	0	0	0	20
Chile	0	0	0	0	0
Peru	0	1	0	1	0
Mexico	0	0	0	0	0
	IMMIGRATION				
	1990	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**1998**
Colombia	17	30	22	27	37
Chile	11	15	6	7	7
Peru	14	19	7	5	8
Mexico	8	6	13	7	14

TABLE 2. ASYLUM SEEKING PETITIONS AND ARRIVALS FROM NARRATORS' COUNTRIES (1990-1998)

[41] See for example a similar classification done by Pille Petersoo, "Reconsidering Otherness: constructing Estonian identity", *Nations and Nationalism* 13 no 1 (2007).

[42] Inga Jasinskaja-Lahti and Karmela Liebkind, in their research with Russian adolescents living in Finland, explain how historically Russians have been subjected to prejudice and discrimination in Finland. Jasinsjaka-Lahti and Liebkind, "Perceived discrimination", 177.

Already in 1990, Finland started being understood as a "multicultural society", at least in official texts[43]. In theory, immigrants were not supposed to "dive" into the host culture, but rather coexist in it while receiving support from the hosting society[44]. To support this there was a shift into a more inclusive language and laws: in 1996 both *kotouttaminen* (loosely translated as "social integration"), and *kotoutuminen* (which can also be loosely translated as "acculturation"), coined by the linguist Jussi Kallio, were incorporated into the official language, replacing progressively the term *integraatio* (integration)[45]. This simple change in vocabulary illustrates an attitude that the Finnish authorities had set in motion: the responsibility of a successful and harmonious coexistence was not supposed to be only on the immigrants' shoulders but also on Finnish citizens[46]. However, there is a contradictory message among these courses of action: on the one hand, political reforms paved the way for an equal recognition not only of immigrants' rights but of the preservation of their own culture. On the other hand, in practice, the shared responsibility of immigrant and native Finns constructing together a diverse society was neither clear nor specified. Research on these policies and its practical application suggests that even though there were changes, Finnish immigration policy was in fact assimilationist, this is, "the message conveyed to immigrants is that they should learn to act like Finns"[47].

This was, summarised, the sociopolitical climate that welcomed the narrators and their families during the 1990s. How they (re)constructed their identities was to be influenced by this complex mixture of acculturation advances and conservative practices.

2.2 Latin American immigration in Finland.

Latin Americans have a short history in Finland, one that shows a consistent aim for rooting in the country. Before the 1970s, Latin Americans who arrived to Finland did so mostly due to family reasons; they came accompanied by a Finnish partner they had met

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[43] Lepola, "Ulkomaalaiseksi suomenmaalaiseksi", 203.

[44] Lepola, "Ulkomaalaisesta suomenmaalaiseksi", 204.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Jean S. Phinney et al. "Ethnic Identity, Immigration, and Well-Being: An Interactional Perspective". *Journal of Social Issues* 57 no. 3 (2001), 499.

somewhere else[48]. Finland had been also one of the preferred destinations in Europe for Latin Americans who searched for better study or job opportunities[49]. The first step for setting a base in Finland can be seen in the foundation of the Suomen Latinalaisamerikkalainen yhdistys in 1964, first established with the purpose of developing commercial relations between the two lands, and later aiming at spreading in Finland knowledge about Latin America and the current realities of its countries[50]. Later on, during the 1970s, Finland received about two hundred asylum seekers from Chile; in minor quantity from other Latin American countries as well[51]. The great majority were highly educated and came accompanied by their family, qualities (along with the fact that they came from a very far place) that made them a key part of the internationalisation of Finland, and in turn, of presenting almost for the first time diversity and difference to its inhabitants[52].

One of the first studies from Chilean asylum seekers dates back to 1980, when the Minister of Employment (*Työministeri* in Finnish, back then *Työvoimaministeri)* published a report that focused on the integration of about 81 Chilean refugees that had arrived to Finland during 1973-74[53]. The study reveals how unknown the Latin American presence was in Finland back then: all of the sources for looking at Latin American presence in northern Europe were taken from studies conducted in Sweden and Switzerland; none was documented so far in Finland. The study reveals something that would be constant in the history of Latin Americans in Finland: their process of acculturation was greatly influenced by the fact that the amount of Latin Americans living here was rather small, up to the point that only in Helsinki and Turku did they have a possibility of mingling and forming networks with other Latin American migrants.

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[48] Niemelä, "Chilen Pakolaisten Sopeutuminen Suomeen".

[49] Maaria Seppänen, "Muistiinpanoja latinalaisamerikkalaisten kokemuksista Suomessa", in Pakkasvirta and Aronen, *Kahvi, Pahvi ja Tango,* 189.

[50] Jouni Pirttijärvi, "Ystävyyttä ja Solidarisuutta", in Ibid., 101.

[51] Ibid., 100.

[52] Mia Komppa, "Rasismi Suomalaisessa Arjessa: Latinalaisesta Amerikasta kotoisin olevien kokemuksia ja käsityksiä" (Master's Thesis: University of Helsinki, 2008), 5.

[53] Niemelä, "Chilen Pakolaisten Sopeutuminen Suomeen".

For Latin America, the 1980s brought a general wave of economic migration. Even though during the 1960s already "friendship" organisations between Finland and Latin American countries had begun to form[54], it has been said, about the 1980s, that "it was a time in where neither the centre for Latin-American studies in the University of Helsinki nor the Latin American studies curriculum existed… (…) The culture of a continent with more than 400 million inhabitants was still quite foreign to Finland"[55]. The efforts for representing themselves in Finland continued steadily, nevertheless. In 1986 the Latin American Cultural Center (*Latinalaisamerikkalaisen Kulttuurikeskus* in Finnish) was founded, with the only purpose of distributing and representing Latin American culture and activities in Finland[56]. Latin America was unknown; networks were difficult to form yet resources grew consistently and new support channels were created. This precisely was mentioned in the section above, the feeling of few of the narrators of being a group "in the middle", which is not only represented by statistics but also by the scarce history that can be found about Latin Americans in Finland.

The Latin American diaspora in Finland is a particular case, not only because their presence is rather moderate in comparison with other ethnic groups, but also because Latin America comprises an incredibly rich, varied, and essentially different amount of cultures, social and political realities, ethnic identities, languages, and geographies. Research has pointed out before that these differences appear to lose their intensity once the migration experience takes prominence; moving to Europe seemed to unite Latin Americans by accentuating their similarities[57]. Even though growth has been steady, the Latin American presence in Finland cannot be compared with other countries. Just as an example, in 2005 they comprised almost 40% of the population in Spain, whereas in

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[54] For example Suomi-Kuba Seura in 1962 or Suomi-Chile Seura in 1963. Pirttijärvi, "Ystävyyttä ja Solidarisuutta", in Pakkasvarti and Aronen, *Kahvi, Pahvi ja Tango,* 99.

[55] Jaime Potenze, "Latinalaisen Amerikan Kulttuurikeskus: Rakkaudesta Amerikkaan", in Ibid., 106.

[56] Ibid.

[57] See for example different works in where Latin Americans are interviewed about their lives in Finland, as Komppa, "Rasismi Suomalaisessa Arjessa", 4, or Maaria Seppänen, "Muistiinpanoja latinalaisamerikkalaisten kokemuksista Suomessa", in Pakkasvarti and Aronen, *Kahvi, Pahvi ja Tango,* 187.

Finland they only accounted for a 1,4%[58]. By December 2018, there were approximately 6900 Latin Americans living in Finland[59]; their cultural presence stronger than ever before: Kolibrí festival for children, Cinemaissi Latin American film festival, Askelten Palo regional dances organisation, or El Barrio cultural centre, are few of the many organisations who have taken as its premise to represent the Latino culture.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background presents the most relevant terms for framing and understanding the analysis. They were chosen based on a thorough review of academic texts and articles; also, recurrent topics in the narratives informed the theoretical focus.

3.1 Otherness

The dichotomy inside/outside is reproduced daily, both at an institutional and individual level, in order to understand the world, from a global to a singular scale. The opposition us/them acts as an unquestioned and natural order, allowing society to comprehend who belongs and who does not[60]. Academically, much of the work on this dichotomy has been based on the concept of Orientalism, developed by Edward Said in the 1970s. Orientalism is defined as "a practice that designates in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours', and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs'"[61]. Following Said, Orient and Occident would then be man-made concepts that change with time and circumstances[62]. From this same perspective, Otherness does not only exist *explicitly;* it

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[58] Komppa, "Rasismi Suomalaisessa Arjessa", 7.

[59] "Population 31.12 by Area, Background country, Sex, Year and Information", Statistics Finland's Database, accessed on July 4, 2019, http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__vaerak/statfin_vaerak_pxt_11rv.px/table/tableViewLayout1/. This does not include those Latin Americans who have received Finnish citizenship at some point.

[60] See for example Sunil Bhatia. "Acculturation, Dialogical Voices and the Construction of the Diasporic Self", *Theory and Psychology* 12 no. 1 (2002), Dympna Devin, Mairin Kenny, and Eilin Mcneela, "Naming the 'Other': Children's Construction and Experience of Racism in Irish Primary Schools", *Race Ethnicity and Education* 11 no.4 (2008), Michael Haldrup, Lasse Koefoed, and Kirsten Simonsen, "Practical Orientalism – Bodies, Everyday Life and the Construction of Otherness", *Geogr. Ann.* 88B no. 2 (2006), or Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference,* ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990).

[61] Edward Said, *Orientalism,* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1995), 54, quoted in Haldrup et al., "Practical Orientalism", 175.

[62] Haldrup et al., "Practical Orientalism", 176.

is also understood that regimes of power are regimes of knowledge, this meaning that Otherness (and Othering practices, in turn) will be more pervasive than what meets the eye[63].

This research understands Otherness as a **purposeful creation, by individuals and institutions (each supporting the other)[64] of two groups: them and us.** Otherness is understood as a separation between majority and minority, but it is also more than that, as the material of this research will show. Otherness has permeated the lives of six narrators, not only as a consequence of Othering practices, but also as a purposeful tool of self-identification and sometimes resistance. They have produced an understanding of Otherness for their own social positioning; in here, Otherness is intrinsically linked to the intimate process of "identification", in where the individual looks at other's identities, in order to form their own[65].

In Europe, the Other is "tested and defined before entry"[66]. This sets the necessary boundaries for nationals to constantly recreate internal cultural hierarchies. Otherness at a national level has, then, two main effects: on the one hand, the presence of the Other and its positioning on the spotlight redefines the nation and what constitutes it. Members of the national territory reinforce their ties to one another not in the basis of sameness between them, but in the basis of being closer amongst them than to those who are outsiders[67]. On the other hand, Otherness has the pervasive effect of transforming the singular into the plural: foreigners, in this case, are thrown into a sack

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[63] Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", 226.

[64] Devin et al.,"Naming the 'Other', 379. The researchers assert that interpretations of who is the "other" are never independently constructed, this is, perceptions of difference and sameness are governed by "discourses encountered in society, through, for example, media, family and community influences".

[65] Michal Krzyzanowski, and Ruth Wodak. "Multiple Identities, Migration and Belonging: 'Voices of Migrants'", in *Identity Trouble: Critical Discourse ad Contested Identities,* ed. Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Rick Iedema (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 99.

[66] Ritva Kastoryano, "Codes of Otherness", *Social Research* 77 no.1 (2010): 93.

[67] Anna Triandafyllidou, "National Identity and the 'Other'", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 no. 4 (1998): 594.

of generalities and suppositions, and any individuality is often forgotten[68]. The physical cohabitation between "us" and "them" makes it then challenging for the in-group to visibly preserve their homogeneity, and therefore, casual and purposeful reproduction of Othering practices happens constantly. One of the most notable examples of this, both in general and in this particular case, is spatial segregation[69]. Although social mixing has been the goal of Finnish policies since the 1970s[70], Helsinki shows spatial patterns of segregation that are not only visible, but constantly on the rise. As research puts it, in neighbourhoods of the capital "the proportion of immigrant residents increases in direct relation to the proportion of social housing"[71]. This does not only indicate the failure of social inclusive policies; it also signals that Otherness is (at the very least) sheltered by institutions.

Academic analysis on Otherness has focused greatly on the work of institutions and discourses, overlooking these same practices in the sphere of daily life[72]. These routine practices have been termed *practical orientalism*, and refer to the "small, often unnoticed and 'banal' acts and articulations in everyday life"[73]. Practical orientalism sips into the ordinary: it constructs discourses that, apparently innocent, reproduce power dynamics and social inequality. It is also protected by the "politics of recognition"[74]; the execution of policies that foster diversity yet in practice actually reinforce the us/them universe. In the Finnish context, a quick glance at Finnish organisations that work with integration reveals the constant practice of differentiation: social projects in where the goal is a diverse and intertwined society, yet far from

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[68] Allan Pred, "Dirty Tricks: The Racial Becomes the Spatial, the Spatial Becomes the Ratial", in *Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographical Imagination,* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 63.

[69] Jean-Francois Staszak, "Other/Otherness", *International Encyclopedia of Human Gepgraphy* (2008): 4.

[70] Mari Vaattovaara et al., "Contextualising ethnic residential segregation in Finland: migration flows, policies and settlement patterns", in *Immigration, Housing, and Segregation in the Nordic Welfare States,* ed. Roger Andersson et al. (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 2010).

[71] Ibid., 65.

[72] Haldrup et al., "Practical Orientalism", 174.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Kastoryano, "Codes of Othernes", 80.

intertwining “us” and “them”, the target group are, fairly always, immigrants[75]. Both the example of spatial segregation and this reality are deeply tied into one of the proposals of this research: to shed light into the pervasiveness of Othering practices and to demonstrate that in order to ensure healthy and conscious diversity, processes and practices need to be rethought.

Because the thesis material is composed of first-person narratives, this research deals with Otherness precisely in the sphere that moves beyond the institutional, that is, with practical orientalism within an immigration context. The immigrant as the Other is defined as “a person designated as such by someone living in a particular place who sees the presence of the Other as a threat to their own security within that territory”[76]. The emphasis in the analysis is in looking at how Otherness has been: understood, processed, adopted, and reproduced. Two researches previously conducted on this topic offer a necessary background. In the first place, when understanding Otherness as part of one’s own identity, research on the United States focusing on Latin American populations highlights how “Latino” as a self-identifying term encompasses a “diverse collective of subgroups (…) often with conflictive cultural backgrounds, political agendas, and social discourses”[77]. This presents an useful point, for in this research there is an almost implicit understanding that the narrators and their families *belong* to a Latino culture; the term “Latino” acting as a familiar umbrella, even if the narrators came to Finland relatively early in life. Self-othering acts here as a way of positioning oneself in the Finnish society: as it will transpire during the interviews, the category “Latino” encompasses connotations that are diametrically opposed to the category “Finnish”. In the second place, theorists have argued that being “the Other” ceases to be a stigma when the Othered individual creates a positive, autonomous identity for

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[75] See for example integration projects here: https://kotouttaminen.fi/osallisuus-ja-syrjaytymisen-ehkaiseminen, in where the target groups are either only immigrants, or the presence of native Finns is usually in a superior position of power (mentor, tutor, instructor). “Osallisuutta edistävät ja syrjäytymistä ehkäisevät hankkeet”, kotoutuminen.fi, accessed October 22, 2019.

[76] A. Begag, ‘North African Immigrants in France’ (Loughborough, European Research Centre, Loughborough University, 1989), quoted in David Morley, “Belongings: Place, Space, and Identity in a Mediated World”, *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4 no.4 (2001): 438.

[77] Guillermo Ávila-Saavedra, ”Ethnic Otherness versus Cultural Assimilation: U.S. Latino Comedians and the Politics of Identity”, *Mass Communication and Society* 14 no.3 (2011): 274.

themselves[78]. However, this research will explore the possibility that the narrators "will deliberately reify and 'essentialise' their identities"[79] in order to adopt an identity that cannot be ridiculed or used as a negative marker against them. This means that being "the Other" will not cease to exist within them, but will be adopted as a part of who they are.

3.2 Ethnic and migrant identity

One of the main aspects of identity is its loose nature: identities are not fixed, neither they are constituted by an unmovable core within each individual. Instead, they are constantly shifting, being contested and negotiated, dependant on internal and external factors[80]. Ethnic identity is defined as "that aspect of acculturation that focuses on the subjective sense of belonging to a group or culture"; also as "the individual's sense of self in terms of membership in a particular ethnic group"[81]. Migrant identities, in turn, have an added element of instability: because (at least in the beginning) the present time of migrants is unstable and subject to many sudden changes, the past acquires an extraordinary relevance when it comes to defining the self[82].

For decades, Berry's model on acculturation has lead many of the researches on immigrant identities. Berry's model consists on four "strategies" of acculturation that individuals adapt in order to navigate new cultural contexts[83]. From these, *integration* is the preferred one: it implies the maintenance of ties with the homeland while

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78 See for example Staszak, "Other/Otherness", 2. Also Jenny Hsin-Chun Tsai, "Xenophobia, Ethnic Community, and Immigrant's Youth Friendships Network Formation", *Adolescence* 41 (2006): 152.

79 Morley, "Belongings", 442.

80 See for example Keya Ganguly. "Migrant identities: Personal memory and the construction of selfhood", *Cultural Studies* 6 no. 1 (2006), Phinney et al., "Ethnic Identity, Immigration", Sunil and Ram Anjali, "Theorizing identity in a transnational and diaspora cultures: A critical approach to acculturation". *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 33 (2009), or Verkuyten, Maykel, "Ethnic minority identity: Place, space, and time", in *The Social Psychology of Ethnic Identity", (*New York & Hove: Psychology Press, 2012).

81 Phinney et al. "Ethnic Identity, Immigration", 495.

82 Ganguly. "Migrant identities", 29.

83 Bhatia. "Acculturation", 58.

developing a healthy attachment to the receiving culture and country[84]. Besides Berry's, other works in the field have also tended to set fixed outcomes when it comes to ethnic identity, predicting for instance that ethnic identity will be "strong" as long as immigrants are willing to retain their ties with the homeland and the target country is a welcoming one[85]. In these studies, there is a silence regarding the different intersections at play in the migrant process. These intersections have been brought forward by postcolonial studies, manifesting that "the formation of immigrant identities in diasporic communities involves a constant process of negotiation, intervention and mediation that is shaped by issues of race, gender, sexuality, and power"[86]. Indeed, fixed models have an "universal" quality, attributing the election of strategies solely to the individual and to solid factors such as how welcoming the receiving country is. They do not only overlook external intersections, but they ignore that in an increased context of globalisation, identity and acculturation processes need to be rethought as mixing and moving, and because of this, self-positioning might encompass internal intersections, namely simultaneous feelings of marginalisation, assimilation, and separation[87].

This research understands ethnic and immigrant identity as a **back-and-forth self-identification process shaped by how the narrators negotiate the external factors that the migration experience presented them with**. Even though Berry's model of acculturation provides a neat explanation for different strategies, it would be incompatible to position the narrators in such simplistic terms when the life stories have demonstrated a complexity that needs to be addressed in detail. The past, here, is a key piece of people's self-identifications and narratives of identity and belonging[88], making the use of oral history again justified.

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[84] The other three are assimilation (to purposefully forget the original culture), separation (to not engage with the new culture), and marginalisation (to lose touch with both the homeland and the new culture). Ibid, p. 58.

[85] Phinney et al. "Ethnic Identity, Immigration".

[86] Bhatia. "Acculturation", 59.

[87] Bhatia and Ram, "Theorizing identity in a transnational and diaspora cultures", 146.

[88] Ganguly, "Migrant Identities", 30.

Furthermore, the construction of ethnic identity cannot be understood as dependant only on the relations and processes with the majority group. Ethnic identity is also shaped by the relation with the in-group, this is, by "interactions with co-ethnics and by discourses about ethnic authenticity"[89]. Besides this, the homeland provides a source for self-understanding, self-definition, and self-presentation[90]. When it comes to external factors and their influence, research in Finland[91] demonstrates that factors that affect the construction of migrant identities are, in the first place, the constant and omnipresent use of terms such as "immigrant" or "foreigner" (even after years of life in the country), as well as the mastering of Finnish language. In the precise case of "Latin Americans", research produced in the United States context argues that when talking about a collective migrant identity, "collectivity" is a challenging concept for Latin Americans to identify with, because of the fact that what constitutes "Latin America" is so vastly cultural and diverse[92]. This is understandable in the American context; however, when looking at Latin American immigration in Finland, some of the narrators will identify almost automatically as Latino, and as part of a Latin American community.

All these factors, axes and intersections that compose ethnic identity and its process of construction are summarised perfectly by Professor Kenya Ganguly, who expresses that "the representation of identity is thus an on-going process, undertaken on many levels, in different practices and sites of experience"[93]. In this research, it can feel as though despite the constant dialogue and negotiations of identity, the ethnic identity of the narrators is coherent and clear. However, ethnic identity is constantly (re)shaped, if not by them, by others, because "even when individual immigrants claim to have integrated themselves into the mainstream host culture, structural and political contexts conspire to combat their assumptions"[94].

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[89] Verkuyten, "Ethnic minority identity", 120.

[90] Ibid, p. 116.

[91] See for instance Anna Rastas, "*Rasismi lasten ja nuorten arjessa: Transnationaalit juuret ja monikulttuuristuva Suomi",* (PhD Diss., University of Tampere, 2007), or Toivanen, "Language and negotiation of identities".

[92] Ávila-Saavedra, "Ethnic Otherness", 273.

[93] Ganguly, "Migrant Identities", 31.

[94] Bhatia & Ram, "Theorizing Identity", 147.

3.3 Family Relations in Migration

Immigration is one of the most stressful events a family can undergo. It displaces family from everything stable and known: jobs, extended family, habits and traditions; sometimes language[95]. Searching for identity in this context, as well as maintaining the core of the family, becomes a complex task due to the overlapping everyday spheres in where the negotiation of "who am I" becomes intertwined with "who are we"[96]. The meaning of *family* thus gets intensified for many, due to the lack of networks in the new country. Parallel to this, research on immigrant families has long asserted that migration (or, *residential mobility*) affects profoundly family processes and adds pressing factors into the children and the own family's development[97]. This is, migrating as a child means a number of external and internal stressors that need to be addressed in order for the child to develop a healthy social integration as an adult. Because of this, it is important to understand family-level migration factors in order to fully comprehend the individual narratives and processes that serve as main material for this research.

According to research, families might go through a complex curve of emotions and reactions since their arrival. There might be an elevated sense of excitement at the beginning, followed by a rush of issues that need to be taken care of (schooling, work). Due to this, family members might delay the proper psychological processing of this new life[98]. Afterward, various cultural dissonances might start to set in, and acculturation gaps may appear. Acculturation gap is defined as the "result of differences between adolescent and parent levels of culture-of-origin and host culture involvement"[99]. School serves as a great arena for children to soak many elements of the new country, whereas parents may lag behind on acquiring habits and learning the

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[95] Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, "Children of Immigration", 70.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Scott M. Myers, "Childhood Migration and Social Integration in Adulthood", *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61 no. 3 (1999): 776.

[98] Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, "Children of Immigration", 72.

[99] Paul R. Smokowski et al. "Acculturation and Latino Family Processes: How Cultural Involvement, Biculturalism, and Acculturation Gap Influence Family Dynamics". *Family Relations* 57 no. 3 (2008): 295.

language[100]. Family dynamics will necessarily change: new habits are sinking in and children move faster in the exploration and "adaptation" process.

As adults, the narrators of this thesis have recounted in detail their life in Finland and their processes of adapting Otherness as part of their identities. Their first contact with the country, however, was as children, as so are many of their replayed memories. Because of this, it is important to understand processes of migration in children. There is a tendency on immigrant children's research to focus largely on their representation as "being trapped in a miserable structural conflict of living between two-cultures"[101] or as their positioning as "luggage", therefore lacking not only feelings but agency. A broader view on the children's definition and experience of migration and diaspora is thus necessary. Maren Bek and Kerstin Von Brömssen have researched what they termed *diasporic consciousness* and *diasporic practices* in immigrant children living in Sweden, with the aim of understanding (from children's own perspectives and words) their relation between the homeland and the new life as immigrants[102]. Diasporic consciousness, in their work, refers to the "sense of belonging and home, ideas of self and identities"[103], whereas diasporic practices referred to participation in activities that related to the homeland (speaking the language, for instance). Results showed that children do differentiate between home (the place where they live) and homeland (the place of family origin). Furthermore, "children in migrant families are active partner in their families' constructions of life in the home, the homeland and in a globalised world"[104]. Both diasporic consciousness and practices were present in the narrators as children, in the recounting on their memories, and what is more important, they were a key element in the process of introducing Otherness as part of their identity, already since the beginning of their lives in Finland.

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Maren Bak and Kerstin Von Brömssen, "Interrogating Childhood and Diaspora through the Voices of Children in Sweden", *Childhood* 17 no. 1 (2010): 114.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid, p. 125.

[104] Bak and Von Brömssen, "Interrogating Childhood", 126.

This thesis understands family relations in migration as **the complex combination of dynamics (mirroring of identities, individual struggles, and joint processes) between those family members who have moved to the new country; also including future complex interactions with those family members who remained in the homeland.**

The role that technology plays in immigrant families' dynamics is another fundamental aspect that needs to be mentioned here theoretically. Technology has increasingly allowed for families to remain in touch not only with other members but also with their roots in the broader sense of the word. It gives "distant individuals the means to not only manage and maintain their connections but also to renegotiate their roles through time"[105]. Technology is connected closely to this research: as decades passed, increasing possibilities and mechanisms of being connected with the homeland opened up to the narrators and their families. Even though migrants can use social technologies to "cultivate this 'ambient co-presence' among family members who are in other countries"[106], the material will show that technology can also serve to distance oneself from the home country, by acknowledging the passing of time and the physical distance with the extended family.

3.2 Intersectionality

As a way of examining how different and overlapping social identities affect an individual's position and outcome in society, the concept of intersectionality was brought to the spotlight within the second wave of feminism between early 1960s and 80s[107]. Its first early definition points out at "superimposing and cumulating features of discrimination and social exclusion as experienced by individuals and groups"[108],

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[105] A.P.N. Aguila, 'Living long-distance relationships through computer-mediated communication', *Sociela Science Diliman*, 5 no.12 (2009): 83-106, quoted in Gonzalo Bacigalupe and María Cámara, "Transnational Families and Social Technologies: Reassessing Immigration Psychology", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38 no. 9 (2012): 1427.

[106] Ibid., 1429.

[107] See for example Sumi Cho et al., "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis", *Signs* 38 no. 4 (2013): 785-810, Elizabeth R. Cole, "Coalitions as a Model for Intersectionality: From Practice to Theory", *Sex Roles* 59 (2008): 443-453, or Patricia H. Collins, "Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas", *Annual Review of Sociology* 41 (2015): 1-20, among others.

[108] Hans-Joachim Bürkner, "Intersectionality: How Gender Studies Might Inspire the Analysis of Social Inequality among Migrants", *Population, Space and Place* 18 (2010): 182.

meaning that it works with the concept of *simultaneity*[109], this is, it understands that a category or an identity (race, gender, age) cannot and should not be analysed, in an individual or a group, as if existing in a vacuum, but rather by understanding it as part of a bigger structure of power and oppression.

Intersectionality as an analytical method, as a framework, or as a perspective, entails a complexity that is difficult to define[110]. In fact some of the scholarship in the field argues that it is a disadvantage to "box" intersectionality, since this poses the risk of "taking away" part of its complexity and possibilities of use[111]. The definition presented by Izabela Dahl and Malin Thor, however, resonates with the purpose of including an intersectional approach in this oral history research. To them, "the intersectionality of social divisions is a constitutive process of both self positioning and the positioning of others. Intersectionality as a research perspective investigates how categories are constructed, how they condition, exclude or include each other"[112]. Since it was first devised for gender studies, the application of an intersectional approach went from examining the lower position of women in a capitalist society to the realisation that multiple disadvantages cannot be examine in an additive way[113]. In this sense, oral history benefits immensely from this, since when an intersectional approach is applied to oral accounts of the self, "it allows the exploration of how particular identifications are always co-constructed with other categories of identity"[114]. This is precisely what is at stake here: Otherness derives from a migration process indeed, but within it are contained a complex sum of identities that need to be understood in relation to each other.

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Collins, "Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas", 3.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Izabela Dahl and Malin Thor. "Oral history, constructions and deconstructions of narratives: Intersections of class, gender, locality, nation and religion in narratives from a Jewish woman in Sweden", *Enquire* 2 no. 1 (2009): 6.

[113] Bürkner, "Intersectionality", 182.

[114] Marjo Buitelaar, "I Am the Ultimate Challenge: Accounts of Intersectionality in the Life-Story of a Well-Known Daughter of Moroccan Migrant Workers in the Netherlands". *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13 no. 3 (2006): 273.

This thesis understands intersectionality as **an approach that deliberately looks at analysing multiple identities in relation to each other, since these, as a group, affect the individual's own self-narrative, their position in society in respect to systems of power, and the relation between said identities.**

Intersectionality focuses on within-group diversity, which per se "fragments the notion that there is one unitary voice for a specific social location, such as race or gender"[115]. Literature in sociological and historical fields has as well incorporated an "intersectional approach" when examining, for instance, how identities intersect and influence each other in the construction of a coherent narrative in daily life[116]. The following example illustrates this. In doing oral history with Anna, a Jewish woman living in Sweden, Dahl and Thor (2009) used intersectionality as a "research perspective" in order to see how different categories intersect in Anna's narrative identity construction[117]. This speaks central to this thesis, since using an intersectional look in oral history testimonies "allows to investigate how groups and individuals that are marginalised and discriminated against negotiate their own and other identities, which leads to a much deeper understanding of different processes of othering, inclusion and exclusion"[118].

The points outlined here are crucial to understand why an intersectional look is fundamental when doing research on Otherness. This thesis uses an intersectional approach to answer a secondary research question, in order to show that researches who take into account multiple identities which intersect, will necessarily be richer and will provide a better of understanding of the narrative researched. To summarise, below is presented a table of concepts of those terms who are considered of the most relevance to theoretically frame the analysis. These concepts are based on an extensive literature review.

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[115] Virginia Tech, "Intersectionality as the "New" Critical Approach in Feminist Family Studies: Evolving Racial/Ethnic Feminisms and Critical Race Theories", Journal of Family Theory & Review 6 (2014): 177.

[116] Collins, "Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas", 9.

[117] Dahl and Thor, "Oral history, constructions and deconstructions".

[118] Dahl and Thor, "Oral history, constructions and deconstructions", 16.

OTHERNESS	Purposeful creation, by individuals and institutions of two groups: them and us.
ETHNIC IDENTITY	Back-and-forth self-identification process shaped by how the narrators negotiate the external factors that the migration experience presented them with.
FAMILY RELATIONS IN MIGRATION	Complex combination of dynamics (mirroring of identities, individual struggles, and joint processes) between those family members who have moved to the new country; also including future complex interactions with those family members who remained in the homeland.
INTERSECTIONALITY	Approach that deliberately looks at analysing multiple identities in relation to each other, since these, as a group, affect the individual's own self-narrative, their position in society in respect to systems of power, and the relation between these identities.

TABLE 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND'S KEY TERMS.

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology section focuses on three aspects: the researcher's thought processes when researching, as well as necessary reflections and ethical considerations; oral history as a method of study, and narrative analysis as a method of analysis.

4.1 Background

This section presents the background for choosing the target group and the logistics of the interviews conducted. This is also the space for outlining and discussing the ethical considerations that arose continuously during the research process.

There are few key reasons for focusing on narratives from Latin American immigrants who have been living in Finland for several decades. The 1.2 section 'Previous research on the topic' presented the fact that even though there is *some* research on Latin

Americans in Finland, additions in term of historical work would be relevant, not only because of contributing to the field, but also because Latin American migrants present an unique group of research: they are seen as closer than other *"Others"* -for example, immigrants from African countries, yet they are indeed a *distant* Other, unlike for instance Estonian immigrants.

The interviews used as main material were conducted between 2017 and 2019. As explained, the initial research idea was to find commonalities in the migration process in immigrants with a Latin American background. For this, two pilot interviews were conducted in 2017. The narrators were found through the researcher's own network: a Latin American acquaintance was approached, who in turn recommended contacting these two interviewees. The idea of the thesis was explained, and interviews were conducted in the most convenient places for them, lasting no more than half an hour. After these preliminary interviews the research was put on hold, resuming at the end of 2018. Six more interviews were conducted then: four narrators were found again through the researcher's own networks (common acquaintances who referred either the narrators to the researcher, or vice versa) and the first two narrators were interviewed again. The theme of the thesis (this time more refined) was explained in detail, and interviews were conducted, averaging two hours per interview. As these were extensive, it was deemed not necessary to do further interviews. Four out of six interviewees agreed to be quoted with their own name, and all of them were comfortable with the use of pseudonyms. At the end, it was decided that all would be quoted with pseudonyms.

Before going into ethical considerations and possible shortcomings at a general level, there is a specific factor to be discussed regarding the amount of interviews conducted and the subsequent issues attached to that. The fact that two of the narrators were interviewed twice affected the final material in two ways. Firstly, there was slightly more material on these narrators, which of course allows the researcher to reflect more on those particular narratives. Even though all the materials are incredibly rich in content and reflections, having an "extra" interview for two of the interviewees allowed to see their narratives more in-depth. It was important to remember then that when embarking on the interviewing process, it is fundamental to "begin incorporating the

concept of reflexivity into our writing"[119]. Having two "extra" interviews proved to be a good exercise of oral history in itself, since it allowed for reflection: how much more knowledge the researcher gathers through a pilot interview, and who decides the point of saturation?. The other effect of having two "extra" interviews was that it added another layer on the relations that are created between researcher and interviewee. Researcher and narrators had met once before in the same context. Now time had passed since the first interview, the theme of the thesis had been developed in depth, and life circumstances had changed. In this case, it was important to recognise that in an oral history work such as this, no six interviews will offer the same richness and articulation of narratives because of a myriad of factors that the researcher can observe and perhaps note down, yet hardly control.

Shortcomings

Concerning all the six narrators, below are outlined few of the potential shortcomings that the research presents:

(1) The fact that the researcher is also a Latin American immigrant cannot be overlooked, for this was the main identity (*Latin American immigrant)* that the thesis wanted to explore in the narrators. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, and not in Finnish. Extracts quoted in the research have been translated into English. Translation always presents the risk of losing information, but the risk in this case is considered minimal: the researcher has Spanish and English as native languages, and therefore was able to produce an accurate translation, even though indeed taking into account that jokes, references in Spanish language, among others, were going to be missed. Besides that, sharing an identity that is central to the thesis has an effect on both sides. On the side of the narrators, especially at the beginning of the interviews certain assumptions transpired about a common background, this is, about a similar experience between researcher and narrator. On the side of the researcher, Valerie Yow presents the concept of transference when doing life stories interviews, this is, the researcher reflecting unconsciously or consciously: "what are the issues I'm confronting in my own life right now? How does this research relate

[119] Valerie Yow, "Do I like them too much?: Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-versa", *Oral History Review* 24 no.1 (Summer 1997), 62.

to these questions I have?"[120]. This proved to be a constant task throughout the listening, analysing, and writing phases: a "vacuum of objectivity" that needed to be created at all times while having the awareness that such thing is impossible. These questionings and reflections are only natural in both cases. Narrative analysis gives some insight by understanding these thought processes as dynamic and hermeneutical: "the researcher is aware that any material being produced by the interviewee has been generated with regard to both the interviewee's subjective perception of his/her situation and history and the interviewees's perception of the researcher and the relationship between the two of them"[121]. Adding to this, feminist historians[122] have been preoccupied with how the presence of the researcher and their dominant position in the interview can obscure the voice of the narrator. Thus, in this thesis, imbalances were created by a particular shared identity and by a power dynamic researcher/narrator that is present always in oral history. The attempt at "evening out the field" (as much as this was possible) occurred not only through constant reflection but it was also impulsed by an interesting particularity that could not be accounted for beforehand: even if theoretically the researcher is at a more powerful position (with more voice, and more knowledge) this case tells that power is not always represented by academic knowledge. All of the narrators, without exception, were aware of the "Latino identity" commonality. Nevertheless, all of them were equally aware of the "power" that the years in Finland had bestowed upon them, vis a vis the researcher's own experience in the country, which amounts to only few years spent in Finland. The interviews turned power from down to up, then: even though both parties were "a Latino in Finland", a complete life in here that started in the childhood translates into language, social networks, family, deep belonging, and a savviness about daily life that the researcher, on the other side, does not possess.

(2) The second shortcoming, most probably present in every oral history research,

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[120] Yow, "Do I like them too much", 60.

[121] Robert L. Miller, "Analysing Life Histories", in *Researching Life Stories and Family Histories,* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2011), 3, https://dx-doi-org.libproxy.helsinki.fi/10.4135/9781849209830

[122] Yow, "Do I like them too much", 61.

touches on the issue of representation, or the fact that information that has been shared in the intimate context of an interview ends up being dissected, analysed, and ultimately going public[123]". This is an issue that preoccupies this thesis on a particular way, since one of the aims here is to understand the particularities and individualities of migration processes by listening to first-person narratives. Marginalised groups are indeed increasingly being heard even within the walls of academia, yet they have "little or no control over representation, interpretation, and dissemination"[124]. This thesis is no exception, although more than careful consideration was taken when thinking about the whys, the hows, and the what. The "emancipatorical" aims of oral history conflict with the researcher's interest: as Dahl and Thor[125] point out and rightly so: the researcher will always be the one choosing the analysis question. This relates to a third ethical consideration:

(3) Open-ended interviews in oral history make it possible to go beyond the reconstructed discourses and assertions collected through survey research, because it gives space to complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions[126]. But this can be deceiving, and needs to be taken into account: open-ended interviews, are, in the end, *interviews;* as mentioned, the departure point comes always from the researcher. In here, there has been an attempt to mitigate this by conducting precisely pilot interviews. With this, new themes of *real* weight in the narrators' lives surfaced, and could not be ignored. Further on in the analysis of the interviews, several identities intersected with the "migrant Other" that was being researched, changing drastically the course of the research since this could not either be overlooked. Thus, it can be said that even if the initial approach indeed comes from the researcher, the thesis is heavily guided by the actual narratives.

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123 Paul Gready, "The Public Life of Narratives", in *Doing Narrative research*, ed. Molly Andrews et al., (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 2.

124 G. Spivak, "Can the subaltern speak?", in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), quoted in Gready, "The Public Life of Narratives", 2.

125 Dahl and Thor, "Oral history, constructions and deconstructions", 16.

126 Marie-Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet, "Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story", in Gluck and Patai, *Women's Words,* 89.

(4) Even though the six narratives represent six different lives, they do not act as a research that can be extrapolated to the whole Latin American population in Finland. Issues of gender, skin colour, and other intersections did not come to play int these cases but might as well be researched in other work.

4.2 Oral history

The main sources of this research are in-depth interviews with narrators who openly, and at length, recounted their lives in Finland. Identity here is not only a substantive but also a verb, an essence that is continuously recreated throughout one's life, whereas migration "remains a singular, subjective and unique experience which resists generalisation"[127]. Because of this, oral history becomes a more than appropriate approach to this research, since it allows the necessary fluidity to understand these narratives in all their complexity and individuality. Since this research topic is not only historical but current, this is, it touches on the effects of Otherness in the narrators' practical, daily actions, oral history becomes therefore more than a vehicle for giving voice; it insists that whatever conclusions are reached in the thesis, these are being formatted and created *from* the social reality that they narrate.

There are three main considerations worth noting when it comes to the use of oral history. They relate to space, form, and content[128]. In the first place, space. As noted above, oral history yields the historical spotlight to the narrators and their personal accounts. With this, history changes its composition: from events and stories which are fixed on a timeline, to discontinuities and silences[129]. Form comes next: oral history is particular, not only in what it seeks but also in what it reveals at the analysis of interviews. The stories collected here through interviews are *narratives:* the protagonists not only had the opportunity to tell their life story in their mother tongue, Spanish, but the open-ended questioning gave them the freedom to go back and forth in the narrative, in a way that written testimonies would have not necessarily allowed. With this, they had the possibility of reflecting more than once about a particular

[127] Krzyzanowski and Wodak, "Multiple Identities, Migration and Belonging", 98.

[128] These are proposed by Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different", in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader,* 34.

[129] Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader.*

memory or time, adding therefore human texture to the research. In this thesis the preoccupation is not to collect exact dates and events, but to grasp, through their own words, the intimate negotiations that took place within themselves. The last consideration on oral history, content, alludes to its capacity to portray a multi-layered reality[130]: the interviews show how the narrators made their own understanding of Otherness in different contexts, seemingly independent of bigger structural factors, while necessarily connected to them. In sum, this approach allows not only for events to be told, analysed and posited against a Finnish sociopolitical background, but it also portrays these events in all its minute richness.

Oral accounts are appointed effective sources following a complex process of research, interview, and analysis. Both the interactions between the narrator and the researcher, and between the narrator and their memories, affect the recollection and the final result in a way that takes the "conclusiveness" factor out of it, precisely because, as Alessandro Portelli puts it, "memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meaning. (…). These changes [in memory] reveal the narrator's effort to make sense of the past and to give a form to their lives"[131]. Oral history, then, refers not only to the form of the sources, neither to its factor of orality, but to the whole process and implications of using sources that are inherently subjective and changeable.

When explaining the use of oral history in research, part of the discussion must focus inevitably on the sources used. Are personal accounts reliable at all, considering that they depend on issues of memory and willingness? Many oral historians have focused on seeing this fluidity as the central point of the research, by defending how the discipline needs to prioritise the importance of relationships and consciousness in the narrators' lives[132]. This thesis prioritises the narrators' memories instead of pushing for specific facts. One particular example can illustrate this: when two of the narrators were asked about their families' reasons for moving to Finland, neither of them seemed to be

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[130] Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different", 34.

[131] Ibid., 37-38.

[132] Kathryn Anderson et al., "Beginning Where We Are: Feminist Methodology in Oral History," *Oral History Review* (Spring 1987): 109, quoted in Yow, "Do I like them too much", 68.

able, or willing, to explain in detail what exactly had moved the families to seek asylum here. Coming back to it later, at some point during the interviews, the answers were equally elusive and vague. From the thesis' point of view, the reasons for coming to Finland were an important point of departure, both in order to give context to their stories, as well as to help the researcher to position their lives in a coherent timeline. However, the unwillingness to clarify this detail gave way to understand that the focus indeed was in their recollection: what they considered important, what they felt was worth sharing as part of their own narrative, and also, what they felt was important (for whatever reason) to preserve for themselves.

As it has been exposed in the previous section, oral testimonies, or practically speaking, interviews, are always different, even if the narrator, interviewer, and questions are the exact same. These interviews, however subjective and open-ended, need to be "carefully contextualised"[133], though: who is speaking, and who is listening? Are there silences, and if so, what do they mean? What are the effects of the relation between researcher and narrators? What is the relation between narrators, if there is any relevant?[134] In which context are the interviews produced, and what are the intersections at play? These are the ethical considerations that have been outlined above, but that draw as well from theory: since the 1970s, oral history has embarked on a conceptual shift in how interviews are interpreted; the focus has gravitated towards an "awareness of the interactive process involving interviewer and narrator, interviewer and content"[135].

4.3 Analysing data: initial questions and narrative research

The interviews conducted for this thesis are framed within qualitative interviewing. Open-ended, in-depth conversations provide "an exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience, often combined with considerable insight. The interview can elicit views of this person's subjective world. The interview

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[133] Joan Sangster, "Telling our stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History", *Women's History Review,* 3 (1994): 4.

[134] Yow, "Do I like them too much", 79.

[135] Valerie Yow, "Do I like them too much: effects of the oral history interview on the interviewer and vice-versa", In *The Oral History Reader,* ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and NY: Routledge, 2008), 62.

sketches the outline of these views by delineating the topics and drafting the questions"[136]. However, even if this is the theoretical understanding of the researcher before the interviews begin, in practice, concrete and on-point answers are often expected; whatever else will likely be considered a divergence from the main topic. The researcher needs to keep this bias present, especially in oral history. As Atkinson puts it, narrators will not "fragment their experiences in thematic (codable) categories"[137]. In this particular case, the constant references to the presence of other identities was more than enough to consider a shift in the research towards issues that were more relevant.

Before and during the interviews conducted for this research, two factors that were considered fundamental were taken into account. Firstly, the one mentioned above, it is impossible for narrators to code their lives according to the researcher's questions. Secondly, it is not possible, or rather is quite difficult, to follow a straight line from data collection to its analysis, regardless of how flawless the process goes. This is supported by research[138] and it means that while interviewing, the researcher is already entangled in a process of simultaneously collecting and analysing data; this being referred as grounded theory[139]. In this case, when two pilot interviews were conducted with a specific purpose, it would have been unwise to discard the new richness that both interviews provided, and the new and potential data that they offered, in favour of pursuing the initial questions. Instead, new research questions and a more specific (and different) line of enquiry was built from it. Furthermore, different identities (besides the migrant identity) started surfacing, which led the researcher to consider exploring an intersectional approach, at least as a secondary research question. Even though the thesis analyses the material through a narrative analysis perspective, this preliminary finding of the research questions is at the core of grounded theory's principle, which understands that researchers cannot know what the most salient issues are, previously to

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[136] H. Bergson et al., "Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis", In *Inside Interviewing,* ed. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2011), 3-25, https://dx-doi-org.libproxy.helsinki.fi/10.4135/9781412984492.n15

[137] Robert Atkinson, *The Life Story Interview* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1998): 3.

[138] Robert L. Miller calls this an "artificial construct", and suggests that "even analysis of the data from first interviews in order to provide feedback for subsequent data collection -is the preferred option". Miller, "Analysing Life Histories", 3.

[139] Bergson et al., "Qualitative Interviewing", 3.

the interviews, and therefore exploration is needed; building further questions on those explorations also being fundamental[140]. Through grounded theory, the data comes from *within* and not from previously elaborated questions. It offers fluidity to the research by shaping it according to what is most relevant. It goes hand in hand with the principle of oral history that puts at the centre the narrators.

When looking at life stories, biographical accounts, or oral history recollections, three methods are proposed: the realist, the neo-positivist, and the narrative[141]. The Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods defines narrative inquiry as "both a view of the phenomena of people's experiences, and a methodology for narratively inquiring into experience and thus allowing for the intimate study of individuals' experiences over time and in context"[142]. Narrative research started being seriously developed in the 1990s within the social sciences, and ever since it has been contrasted heavily against research that is factual and based on "hard facts", which had been a tradition in the social scientific analysis. Instead, narrative analysis aims at seeing the "very construction of narratives and likewise the role they play in the social construction of identity"[143].

The justification for using narrative analysis in this thesis is based on the take that narrative research has on subjectivity. Narrative analysis proposes on this that "subjective perception is malleable"[144]. Through this prism, the focus shifts towards *how* the individual has negotiated this reality, always taking into account that this process of negotiation is never finished, therefore allowing for an ever-changing subjectivity of the narrator[145]. In the narrative approach, "rather than being a problem,

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[140] Bergson et al. "Qualitative Interviewing", 3.

[141] Miller, "Analysing Life Stories", 3.

[142] Jean D. Clandinin & Vera Caine, "Narrative Inquiry", in *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods,* ed. Lisa M. Given (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc., 2012), 2, http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.helsinki.fi/10.4135/9781412963909.n275

[143] Sarah Earthy and Ann Cronin, "Narrative Analysis", in *Researching Social Life,* ed. Gilbert Nigel, (London: Sage, 2008), chap. 21, Earthy, Sarah and Ann Cronin. "Narrative Analysis". In *Researching Social Life,* edited by Gilbert Nigel. London: SAGE, 2008, chap. 21, http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/805876/9/narrative%20analysis.pdf

[144] Miller, "Analysing life stories", 13.

[145] Miller, "Analysing life stories", 13.

subjectivity, the manner in which the respondent perceives his/her situation and activities in social structures and networks, is the very stuff of analysis"[146] . This is not only relevant but also a key point in this research's analysis, precisely because of the subjectivity of Otherness: it can be defined objectively, outside the individual's internal processing, but its subjectivity and how is interpreted and lived, is what at the end concerns the research.

Once the way of approaching the data is established, the analysis takes part. Clear, concise methods on how to look at narrative material are not as common as with for instance ground theory or phenomenological analysis[147]. Two approaches are salient: categorical and holistic. While the holistic approach focuses on seeking understanding on one particular section of text in the course of many interviews, categorical approach focuses on a phenomenon, and contrasts it across many interviews with the same person or with different interviewees[148]. Content vs. form is the other side of the analysis. Analysis that focuses on content is concerned with the substance of the text, as the name indicates. Form, in turn, is concerned with the structure[149]. This thesis focuses on content. With a categorical-content approach in mind, the research looks for similarities of the same event, or concept, coming up in other stories, while also examining the content from a wide variety different angles that attend at subjectivity and intersection.

There are three phases in the analysis of narrative stories[150]. First, a factual base is laid; this is, the narrator tells their story and puts their life into context. Second, the researcher decides on key themes that have consistently come out in the previous factual base, and lastly, the researcher digs deeper on the respondent's answers, on why they were produced in that specific way, "drawing conclusions about the state of mind and

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146 Ibid.

147 Corinne Squire, "From Experience-Centred to Socioculturally-Oriented Approaches to Narrative", in *Doing Narrative Research,* ed. Molly Andrews et al. (55 City Road: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2017), 2, https://dx-doi-org.libproxy.helsinki.fi/10.4135/9781526402271.n3.

148 Earthy and Cronin, "Narrative Analysis", chap. 21.

149 Ibid

150 Miller, "Analysing Life Stories", 15-17.

reasoning of the respondent at the time that events took place"[151]. Indeed, this thesis found key life spheres in where Otherness was at the core, but categorising a narrative text runs the risk of producing, at the end, an analysis that does not put the narrative at the forefront. As Matti Hyvärinen puts it, selecting "statements of the text on thematic bases (…) amounts to killing the narrative before analysing it, or, in other words, wiping out the narrative aspect of the material"[152]. Because of this, and observing also that the narrators divided their stories in past recollections and adult reflections, it seemed relevant, and most accurate, to study Otherness in a timeline perspective of then and now.

Within the phases mentioned above, the following specificities take place as part of the research[153]: (a) the researcher gets immersed in the data; in this case the interviews were transcribed immediately after they were conducted, and as the transcription process was taking place the researcher listened carefully to lightly identify patterns or categories that were interesting and that had come up already with previous narrators. During this phase, new key pieces that could have been present in previous interviews, yet overlooked, were scouted for, (b) researchers proceed to code and memo-write[154]. This makes sense of the data by discarding a great amount of material that serves as a filling, yet is irrelevant for the research itself. In this thesis, Otherness was the key word, or theme, that needed to be written and extracted (coded), (c) the development of meta-code categories, or grouping the data in similar families, because "they share some common characteristic -the beginning of a pattern"[155]. In this case, finding 'families' proved to be challenging, since as mentioned before, it was considered important to keep the flow of the narrative at the forefront instead of clinically cutting out categories from the texts. Eventually dividing the material between past recollections and present

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[151] Rosenthal, 1993, 61-63; quoted in Ibid., 17

[152] Matti Hyvärinen, "Narrative form and narrative content", in *Methodological Challenges in Childhood and Family Research",* ed. Irmeli Järvinen and Miia Lähde (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2008): 44.

[153] These series of steps are based on Patricia Leavy's account of narrative research specifically for oral history. "Research Design", in *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research,* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 59.

[154] Ibid, 59.

[155] J. Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers,* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), quoted in Leavy, "Research Design", 59.

reflections was the grouping strategy that made more sense, (d) continuous and back-and-forth process of looking at memo notes from the interviews' readings. In this case, it allowed to connect consistently and continuously with the research questions. Finally, "linking the personal with the political" has been also added as a part of the analysis[156], since Otherness cannot be analysed only as a private phenomena.

5. ANALYSIS

The thesis presents two research questions, as noted in section 1.1. The first one is how did Otherness materialise in the narrators' daily lives, and how was it negotiated when constructing a narrative about themselves. Both the materialisation and negotiation of Otherness are analysed through the frame of time: childhood memories on the one hand, adult reflections on the other. These two life periods, although apparently commonsensical, were not pursued during the interviews and do not appear in the narratives in a neat timeline. However, on an unpredictable yet natural way, narrators distinguished between perceptions and negotiations of Otherness "then" and "now". By examining Otherness in past and present, the thesis not only offers agency to the narrators when sharing their personal stories, but besides that, the timeline perspective offers a complete and interesting view on how questions of Otherness shift as contexts, age, and in general, life, change. The second question examined is why an intersectional approach is needed when studying Otherness. This question steams from the interviews themselves, for the data revealed how important would be to bring intersectionality to light. Even though the answer does not delve fully into an intersectional analysis, the question examines, through three examples, the intrinsic presence of intersectionality when looking at Otherness in a migrant identity.

Even though the results are grouped in categories and analysed as a whole, they will present what would be perhaps considered inconsistencies, and hardly a pattern will be "discovered". This is, as repeatedly emphasised, one of the main goals of the research:

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156 Heather Fraser, "Doing Narrative Research: Analysing Personal Stories Line by Line", *Qualitative Social Work* 3 no. 2 (2004): 186.

to use oral history to reveal how individual, complex, and unique, the migration process is.

Note on observations about the narrators' impressions on arrival to Finland.

Narrator	Country	Age and year of moving to Finland	Why?	Other relevant observations
Vera	México	1989, 7 years old	Family reasons: both parents (Argentinian and Mexican) found work in Finland.	
Olivia	Chile	1992, 10 years old	Political refugee	
Abel	México	1994, 13 years old	Family reasons: Finnish mother separated from Mexican father.	At the time of arrival, Abel was bilingual in Finnish and Spanish.
Rosa	Colombia	1999, 10 years old	Political refugee	Bruno and Rosa are cousins (their mothers are sisters).
Bruno	Colombia	1999, 9 years old	Political refugee	
Iris	Peru	2000, 13 years old	Family reasons: Peruvian mother remarried a Finnish man.	

TABLE 4. KEY LIFE FACTS ABOUT THE NARRATORS.

Before going into the results of the analysis it is important to offer some background context about the narrators. Since it would be a lengthy task to examine every detail of their background, the table above shows few relevant details: country of departure, year and age at the time of arrival, as well as "motives" for moving to Finland. It is also pertinent to introduce few observations that the narrators made about their departure and arrival experience. This helps in understanding, through their own words, how the migration process produces deep emotions that will impregnate the consequent negotiations of Otherness that the thesis explores.

Firstly, the process of leaving the homeland and arriving to a foreign country brought to the narrators feelings of uncertainty. Research on migrant children has proposed that the

idea of home, to them, is more than a domestic physical space, being instead a "concrete site of social relations and practices, involving familial and other social relations"[157]. Indeed, this is confirmed through the narratives: leaving Peru and Colombia meant leaving what composed the home for Iris and Rosa. At that age, social relations were a fundamental piece of it and therefore the departure experience is inherently tied to the loss of the first friendships.

> It was hard yes, because our economical situation in Peru had improved, I had started in Steiner school, I had friends there, so it was horrible, I was a teenager, that's a very difficult age, I had started to make new friends and suddenly they tell me 'no, we are leaving'. (Iris)

> I didn't like it at all, I thought 'they've just ruined my life' because in those years what you're interested in are friends, school, and I didn't wanna leave that […] But a kid has no place to give an opinion, so I never, ever, threw a fit or questioned anything, I only said 'ok, we'll pack' and month later we were leaving. (Rosa)

These recollections bring forward the observation of how central friendships are in the life of a child, and how 'home' is tied to social relations more than to the homeland per se. This will be a relevant detail to remember, since further on the analysis will show how important social relations are, as a context for Otherness to appear.

Another important contextualisation is necessary, because moving as a migrant is quite different from moving as an asylum seeker, as half of the narrators did. Whereas many of the factors that influence the migration process in both are shared, "the trauma suffered by refugee children before departing their homeland greatly influence their subsequent adaptations"[158]. In Olivia's case, her father had been a political prisoner of Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile for approximately a decade. After the 1988 Plebiscite, his sentence of life in prison was commuted to banishment outside of the country for 25

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[157] Caitríona Ní Laoire et al., ""Introduction: Childhood and migration -mobilities, homes and belongings", *Childhood* 17 no. 2 (2004): 156.

[158] Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, "Children of Immigration", 28.

years. This is what made the family move to Finland, which, paired with the relation between Chile and Finland at the time, gave a different context to what Olivia felt on departing, since her relation with the country had been born already out of ties of solidarity between Finns and Chileans.

> Many children of political prisoners in Chile had godfathers or godmothers in different countries, this was part of the Solidary Movement. There was an active circle in Finland, especially in Varkaus, so they were waiting already for us, they had sent clothes, Finnish sweets,… […] Also the family of a journalist who worked for Savon Sanomat, well the family did a handwritten book in where they pasted pictures of Finland, texts about Finnish habits, so I knew that everybody here was blond with blue eyes, that they were all super white, that nature was super green, that there was something called sauna in where everybody goes together naked; they sent pictures of the houses… I think I knew what Scandinavian design was already in the 90s!.
>
> I was really happy of leaving Chile, really happy, and I didn't understand why not everybody was as happy as I was, for example my brother Pablo was happy as well, but… for example in the airport I remember thinking 'why is everybody crying if this is actually something really good?', and everybody was crying, and I wasn't. (Olivia).

Although recollections of departure and arrival do not constitute the main research material of thesis, they still needed to be presented. These are filled with meaning and feelings, and therefore it helps in understanding migration as a process that starts already *at* the home.

5.1 Otherness then: childhood recollections and negotiations

Approximately a decade ago, John W. Berry et al. asserted that through acculturation, "immigrant children learn about the norms of the host culture, making social and

psychological adjustments to fit into the new society"[159]. This premise is still the basis for research on migration processes; the suggestion here being that children possess the *agency* that allows them to fit into a new environment. In this section, recollections and negotiations of Otherness during childhood will be analysed. Whether disguised as isolation, or as flagrant as bullying, Otherness appeared in many forms and also had just as multiple mechanisms of being "managed". This section suggests that the immigrant children of these narratives, instead of agency, *possessed -or had to make up- resources* to negotiate the Otherness they were confronted with; Otherness that made it impossible for them to "fit" softly and swiftly into a new society.

Immigrant children experience a very particular set of changes since the start of their migration journey[160]. How impactful their first memories are can be seen in how exact the recollections are. Bruno's and Rosa's families sought asylum in Finland because the unstable political situation in Colombia was becoming unsustainable for their everyday safety. They were sent to Vaasa almost immediately after their arrival to Helsinki. Even though they lived in different neighbourhoods and went to different schools, during their first months in the city they shared the same experiences.

> She [Magdalena, the translator appointed to them in Vaasa] was supposedly the one who had to *teach us* Finnish culture, and she told us that Finnish people use for winter these suits… the suits you use when you go skiing, the *haalarit,* so she took us to buy a lot of those, of different colours, and all our family was in those suits… Rosa and I had fuchsia, blue, Rosas's mom was pregnant and crammed in that suit, imagine a foreign family in a City Market with all those suites on… [laughter]. (Bruno)

> Magdalena was of much help because she took us to the *kirpputori*, she showed us what was the clothing for us to survive the winter, and these were the *haalarit,* I mean, we looked all like *teletubbies,* it was horrible, those shoes,

[159] J. W. Berry et al., *Immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation across national contexts* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006), quoted in Jun Li, "'My home and my school': examining immigrant adolescent narratives, from the critical sociocultural perspective", *Race Ethnicity and Education* 13 no. 1 (2010): 120.

[160] Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, "Children of Immigration", 7.

> those boots, and us in the stores wearing that… as a matter of fact we had one *haalari* of different colour per day! Sure, now in hindsight I'm sure we made a fool of ourselves, we must have been the joke of Vaasa, a *teletubbie* family [laughter]. (Rosa)

The almost exact reproduction of this shared memory supports how profound recollections of Otherness are for children and how these stay alive in the most detail, decades afterwards. Furthermore, even though clothing and ways of dressing might be interpreted as quite a banal expression of physical differences, these should not be disregarded, since there are feelings attached to it: back then for Bruno and Rosa, *having to learn how to dress for winter* was not only a recognition of their difference, but the acknowledgement of new things to be learned.

Otherness as loneliness

Friendships in the school are central to the healthy development of immigrant children and teenagers[161]. Subtly, in the narratives, Otherness manifested itself through loneliness, or isolation at the school. Olivia moved from Chile to Finland (specifically to Varkaus) in 1992 at nine years of age. Hers was the last family of Chileans who sought asylum in Finland as a long-term consequence of Pinochet's dictatorship.

> I lived in Varkaus 7 years, then at 16 years old I moved to Tampere, I couldn't stand living there […] I never had a good time there. I lived around my family, read a lot, and had some friends but **to be honest I always felt really alone in Varkaus, I never felt a connection with others**. […] Ever since I was a kid I knew how bad the situation was for my parents, so at some point I took the decision as a kid that I could not cause them added stress and problems, this means, I became the perfect girl. […] The only thing I wanted as a kid was for my dad to be out of prison, and my wish was granted, so according to a very absurd logic that I had as a 9 years old girl, I said to myself: 'the wish I asked

[161] Päivi Toivikko et al., "Kaikki pitää ottaa mukaan välkällä: Maahanmuuttajaoppilaiden näkemyksiä ystävyydestä ja oppimisesta", in *Eläytymismenetelmä 2017: Perusteema ja 11 muunelmaa,* ed. Jari Eskola et al., (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2017), 153.

> for was granted, so I cannot ask for anything else anymore', so I started being the perfect girl, I learned Finnish quite easy, in a second so to say. (Olivia)

The nature of the asylum seeking process "generates tremendous tensions with the family", and possible outcomes for asylum seeker children range from post-traumatic stress syndrome to feelings of failure, guilt, remorse, or panic[162]. This is why Olivia's narrative on Otherness includes the inability of feeling accompanied at home. The disconnection she felt outside the family environment could not be compensated in the home, for the space was taken by the gratefulness (and guilt) she felt she *needed* to feel because of moving to Finland.

> There was a Peruvian-Finnish family in Joroinen, a small nearby village, but besides that we were the only ones [foreigners]. So, I never had the feeling in Varkaus of being like any other kid. **I was always standing out because everywhere I was the Chilean girl, the political refugee** […] A strategy to survive was to somehow become arrogant. If they were making me stand out for being different, **I said to myself 'ok, if I am different that means I'll be better than the rest'** […] Besides being different for being Chilean, I was different for being more politically active [than the rest of her peers] so I was *too* different, and **I did not even have the decency of trying to be the same as the Finns, but the opposite, I was even exaggerating my differences.** The arrogance of not apologising, of not trying to be "more" Finnish… it was for Finns a very odd thing, that my way of surviving was to feel better than the rest. For example, in Finnish language, in *äidinkieli,* I was one of the best at my school and I would brag about it, when someone would pick on me for being an immigrant I'd look at them and I'd say "please, learn to speak and write your own language first". (Olivia)

Throughout her whole childhood in a small town, Olivia did not have other immigrant peers, let alone Chilean. Otherness, hence, translates as loneliness in many spheres: being singled out at school, not having other Latin American friends (with whom, for

[162] Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, "Children of Immigration", 27.

example, practice the language), and not *wanting* to take space at home in account of the refugee experience, which was stronger for her father. Olivia negotiated the strong sense of displacement and Otherness by becoming, in her words, *arrogant.* Her attitude might have another reading, though: Otherness for her manifested not only in loneliness, but in the fact that she, as a whole, was not being seen; instead, she was "the Chilean refugee". It appears as if Olivia developed a determination for making all of her identities visible, therefore reacting by being extremely vocal about the aspects in where she excelled.

Otherness as isolation

Research shows that even though immigrant children in Finland might have quite many immigrant peers, their wish is that they would befriend more native-Finns of the same age[163]. On the other hand, children who can keep a good amount of contacts from their own countries (this is, they have a culture in common, they practice the language) have a better disposition and chance for school success[164]. These premises put the pressure on the immigrant child's actions, calling for reflection: when speaking about achieving wellbeing in a new life, should the accent be put on their *choices?*. In the case of Latin American children in Finland, however, it was not always possible to have peers of the same culture "available" in order to maintain their ties and lower the pressure of acculturation.

Being on a *MaMu-luokka*[165] gave Rosa a distinctive feeling of Otherness, not only because she was not sharing a classroom with Finnish children, but because she did not have a common language with her other immigrant peers. Even though she shared with her cousin Bruno their first months in Vaasa, he ended up moving to another school, which just accentuated her loneliness.

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[163] A. Kivijärvi, *Etnisyyden merkityksiä nuorten vertaissuhteissa. Tutkimus maahan- muuttajataustaisten ja kantaväestön nuorten kohtaamisista nuorisotyön kentillä,* (Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusseura, 2015), quoted in Toivikkö et al., "Kaikki pitää ottaa mukaan välkällä", 154.

[164] Ibid.

[165] MaMu-luokka, or "Perusopetukseen valmistavaa opetusta" is offered to immigrant children or adolescent of immigrant background aged 6-17 who do not have sufficient knowledge of Finnish to study primary school in Finnish language. "Valmistava Opetus", Helsingin kaupunki, last modified September 25, 2019. https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/fi/kasvatus-ja-koulutus/perusopetus/mita-opiskellaan/valmistava/

> Basically the refugees I know who came at the same time as me were my Syrian friend and my Kurdish friends, Bruno, and me. And so they had a common language, Somali, Arabic, so because they all had a common language it is difficult for them to learn or to like Finnish; I didn't have anyone to speak to after Bruno left, you see? So later on, in the 'normal' class I was the only foreigner in the classroom, but **I never thought I was being put to the side… it's also that I obviously understood that they've been studying together since 1st grade, there's a symbiosis, a different sort of camaraderie**… […]
>
> There was a Finnish girl that was sort of the rebel of the classroom; we'd always be partnered up for homework and I remember the teacher would say that if we didn't finish we'd take the homework to '*hima'*, so I looked at her and asked 'what's *hima*', and she stopped, she laughed… but she laughed with empathy, you know? She realized that 'aha, she's just been out of *MaMu-luokka*, she doesn't know the slang', so she looked at me and said '*hima* is *koti*, when they say we will finish this at *hima* it means we'll finish at home', and so I remember I called my Syrian friend and I said 'I have a new word for you, *hima*' and so we both started using *hima*, it wasn't *koti* anymore" and so little by little we started using the slang. (Rosa)

Children of already five years of age are able to identify external markers (skin colour, background, language), and therefore are able to position themselves in the world within distinct categories[166]. Indeed, Rosa's negotiation of Otherness entails understanding it as a natural part of a new process she had embarked on. In here, classmates had been together longer, she had just arrived. Rosa, instead, ended up finding a space of her own outside the walls of the school; she negotiated her Otherness by being aware of her surroundings: the existence of something else beyond the dichotomy new country/homeland or Finland/Colombia. Precisely in Finland, spaces that foster "different youth cultures" offer a space to be something "more than Finnish"[167] , and it was this opportunity of bonding with other immigrant children what

[166] Hsin-Chun Tsai, "Xenophobia, Ethnic Community", 287.

[167] Rastas, "Rasismi lasten ja nuorten arjessa", 118.

allowed Rosa to position herself, quite early, in a new social space, in a way that was satisfactory for her.

> For me, the first thing I realized, the first cultures I met in Finland were actually foreigners, because of my immigrant friends, for example from Somalia. **That's when I learned that there are different cultures besides the Finnish one** […] When we got to high school, my Syrian friend and I were out in different classrooms, so we would be making new friends but for instance we knew that they would never invite us to birthdays, it wasn't like 'no you're not invited', it was just that well, you'd realise there was a party and you weren't there, but anyhow we would have an amazing time the two of us. The friendship that we had and the things we did were more than enough for us to create a healthy self-esteem and face everything, for us to know we were not alone, for us to know that our families accepted the other… […] **It was in Helsinki, when we moved here in 2004, when because of my job in McDonalds I made Finnish friends. I could choose, see?** (Rosa)

Friendships with other immigrant peers (a) gave Rosa the knowledge and the perspective of the existence of other cultures, (b) shaped her identity and (c) helped her position herself in the new society she was being part of.

If Olivia's lack of space at home, described above, hinted at accentuated feelings of Otherness overall outside the family environment, in Rosa's case the theme of family and its values comes up constantly throughout her narrative. Finland was discussed at home in the most common of ways: through food. Milk was too expensive, they did not like dark bread, and Rosa's mother questioned in more than one occasion whether her daughter was being fed properly at school, since porridge seemed not enough.

> I think that if one comes here without children is harder… for an adult to come here without children is harder because there are a lot of things that an adult does not realise. We as adults are simpler, we get rid of many traditions, whereas kids are taught traditions […] My mom was in shock so many times at

> what I was being fed at school, and I'd be like "no mom this *näkkileipä* is nice", … we were like translators for them, everywhere we'd point at things and show them, it was helpful. (Rosa)

Rosa handled Otherness not only through her own experiences, but also through her mother's encounters with the new country. She saw the value in providing her with new information, and in bridging the acculturation gap, this is, the gap between what she was learning in school and what her mother was not at that point exposed to. Indeed, migration tends to re-structure both family dynamics and family roles, with "culturally scripted parental authority turned upside down"[168]. Rosa tapped into this dissonance and accepted it as beneficial for both sides. She also felt that Latin American culture put a lot of weight on how the children are connected to the parents, and understood it as "loyalty" vis a vis her Finnish classmates who were, in her view and words, "completely detached" from their own parents. This, combined with the presence of other immigrant classmates, were resources that Rosa used to feel comfortable in difference, to understand it as a natural part of life.

The process of bonding with peers appeared as well in Abel's narrative as a scenario for Otherness manifesting. Abel, despite speaking Finnish as a mother tongue (his mother being Finnish and raising him in Finnish language in Mexico) did also feel "*Othered"*.

> **In a way I had mentally prepared for the change**, I knew it was going to be quite different, you know? Also, I remember that back in Mexico, in school, I also felt lonely and without friends, so when we arrived to Finland let's say I made an effort on the "social side", and that effort seemed to work. But at the same time I felt in a complete different world. I remember two occasions: once I came home crying; everything was so different and I remember feeling so many emotions. Another time I came with a friend I had made at school, so I don't know, I sort of understood this as a "rollercoaster", you know? […]

[168] Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, "Children of Immigration", 75.

> But yes, absolutely, making friends was also something that varied a lot. My best friend during high school was half Finnish half Romanian, and even though he had always lived in Finland and didn't speak so well Romanian, **there was some sort of connection, right? Something that is similar to you, even though we came from very different cultures,** Romania and Mexico, but some sort of connection, like 'I know this person'". (Abel)

Abel's "rollercoaster", this is, his feelings of Otherness, presents two interesting points of analysis. On the first place, his Finnish-Mexican double nationality naturally entitles him to privileges; precisely knowing the language, and the country (Abel visited several times with his mother before moving permanently) allowed him to understand the importance of the change that was about to take place. Not only he was *prepared* for the change, but as a matter of fact he could *make an effort* to be social, since he knew the language. However, being privileged in one aspect does not, and did not back then, entitle him to an immediate belonging. He recalls making friends as a process that did not follow necessarily a straight line. This opens up the second point: racial grouping (in a racially mixed setting, like his school was) is "a developmental process in response to an environmental stressor, racism. Joining with one's peers for support in the face of stress is a positive coping strategy"[169]. The narratives empirically prove this: in Abel, being the "Other" with "others" encompassed a more diverse understanding of himself, as well as a more compassionate view of what means to " be different". This is similar to Rosa's case, and it will appear again in yet another narrative, since bonding "through Otherness" was the case for Iris as well.

> My first friends were coincidentally Finnish, ok? and precisely they were victims of bullying, and I always wanted to defend them, **in some way I felt connected to them because I was also an *outcast.*** And especially what was very important to me is that I had lived a very violent childhood at home, with things that you don't see in Finland everyday. Of course there's violence here, things like that, yeah? but not in the same way as South America. So it was like

[169] B.D. Tatum, *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? and other conversations about race,* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), quoted in Hsin-Chun Tsai, "Xenophobia, Ethnic Community", 293.

> I was living a double life, that one back then and here, the life with my friends, and I didn't have the language to tell them all I had lived, so I had to act as normally as possible but at the same time I know what I had lived through. […]
>
> I've been pushed in the metro, I've been called *'apina'* […] I just… I didn't say anything, I would feel really sad, it affected me a lot, I remember crying on the tram because it felt so bad, I felt that I've gone through so much in Peru and now I come here and everybody tells me I'm a monkey? **What happened to me was that I blocked everything, I did not feel anything, when people'd tell me that I'm a monkey I wouldn't even listen to them, I didn't wanna study, I didn't want anything.** (Iris)

Otherness for Iris intersects heavily with her past of domestic violence and abuse. Coming to Finland from Peru with her mother and stepfather, Iris had to finally leave the home at the age of eighteen. Before that, the critical situation *inside* the home, combined with the lack of language and belonging *outside* the home, did not allow for her to find a space in where she could reveal and explore herself in the new country. Iris experienced Otherness by perceiving herself as deeply different from the rest in *every* aspect of her life. As she did not have a safe space to manage these Othering experiences, she recalls "shutting everything down" as the only strategy that seemed possible at the time. Only by doing this, Iris was able to move forward, study, and eventually become completely independent.

Otherness as rejection of oneself

For Vera, who moved with both her parents in 1989 to Helsinki, Otherness manifested as a loss of identity since the very beginning of her migration process: the lack of meaningful connections both at school and at home embarked her in a process that made her (a) aware of her most evident differences with other peers, and (b) reject this Otherness as something that did not even need be brought up or spoke about.

> [At the beginning in the new school] I didn't wanna meet anybody, I thought they were laughing about me. **I wanted to be blond, I wanted to have blue**

> **eyes, so all of a sudden you start disliking how you are, you wanna be like the rest.** […] It wasn't easy back then, my parents are not typical Latino people but obviously still they have a very strong culture, so we ate together, did things together. We didn't have anyhow a very strong Latino culture, we were more like… 'euro-latinos'. But to me it was not so much about the culture at home but mostly about how I saw myself: I saw myself ugly because I wasn't blonde with blue eyes. That's racism that comes from within. […]
>
> My friends were and have always been Finnish, it's just that… I've always had that need of integrating, it's a natural thing in me, it'a strong thing in me. I don't wanna say "I'm a foreigner, so I'm better/worse than you", you know? (Vera)

The comparison of oneself against the new (and overwhelming majority) can be almost unavoidable, especially at that age, but in Vera's case, the lack of a family role in terms of keeping alive the homeland culture, as well as her surroundings being exclusively composed of members of the majority, give way to a lack of reinforcement of Vera's own cultural background. This, in turn, makes her negotiate Otherness by *wanting* to be different. Vera made sense of her Otherness by disconnecting from it and attributing it to a "natural" need of integrating with the majority.

Otherness as bullying

Experiences of inclusion and exclusion begin already "in the school yard, or neighbourhood, in where concepts of national identity, assimilation and integration become already seen in how children negotiate and position their own identities with regards to others"[170]. Even though the idea of a preparatory class for children to learn the language faster is needed and understandable, these classrooms also become pockets of isolation that "perpetuate the identity of 'otherness' (…) and create opportunities for them to be target of discrimination"[171]. Bullying or racism are then quite possible expressions of Otherness in these contexts. Bullying is defined as physical, verbal, and psychological abuse, perpetrated by one or more actors with the intention of causing

[170] Devin, Kenny, and Mcneela, "Naming the Other", 370.

[171] Hsin-Chun Tsai, "Xenophobia, Ethnic Community", 292.

harm[172]. For Bruno, moving to another address (even though still in Vaasa) meant relocating to a different school than his cousin Rosa. He suffered bullying in the new school, which would then completely define his identity construction process.

> **That was the first time that I realized I'm not white, cause in Colombia I am not one of the darkest…I didn't know what racism was till then**. […]. I arrived to the 'normal' school and spoke to the kids with my poor Finnish, I asked them 'I'm looking for this teacher' and right away I got pushed, they were laughing, right away […] After the first class we needed to go to the yard for recess and again it started the pushing, and I didn't know what to do cause they were so many… and then Marko came, he grabbed me from my shirt and said 'come on, let's go'. I thought he was also gonna punch me but he said 'let's go to there to the swings' and we went and sat there, and he was all interested in me, we started talking about why I'm here and so on… and ever since, ever since that day he invited me to his house to play with him, and ever since we're best friends. (Bruno)

The most relevant reading of Bruno's experience is that Otherness made him see colour for the first time in his life. This is undoubtedly one of the first milestones for migrant children when constructing an identity: to see one's own's difference through the eyes (and in this case actions) of others. Bruno's narrative also offers a dichotomy: on the one hand, part of the children at the school are violent and aggressive. On the other hand, a child who is part of that majority proves to be completely the opposite, and becomes his best friend up to date. As it will transpire later on in the analysis, for several reasons Bruno could not bring himself to talk about the matter at home. The rejection that he had to endure from his "peers", added to the fact that there was not a safe adult space to vent out and make sense of what was happening, resulted in Bruno negotiating his own identity by constructing a narrative in where his homeland (and the identity attached to it) were rejected.

[172] Toivikko et al., "Kaikki pitää ottaa mukaan välkällä", 159.

> When I started school after *MaMu-luokka,* that's the first moment in where I understood that I was where I wasn't supposed to be, that I was different,… because we were in a M*aMu-luokka* in where you see cultures, colours, and I mean *colours*... and then there's the white kids playing quite far from us, so you realise you're different. After that when I went to school and I met Marko… **I started developing not a bitterness towards Finland and Finnish people but towards being Colombian. I chose to… try as much as possible to be Finnish so when I walk anywhere I can be neutral, you know.** (Bruno)

The mentioning of "choice" in this context deserves a reflection. How much "adapting" was an own choice, and not a mere strategy for survival? Furthermore, it might be tempting to find commonalities in Vera's and Bruno's negotiations of their Otherness: Vera rejected her Mexican identity, just as Bruno attempted to "be as Finnish as possible"; both being read as mechanisms for coping with Otherness. The next part of the analysis, however, will bring forward the fact that now, as adults, the way for them to manage Otherness is very different. This will strengthen the point of the thesis: the analysis of first-person narratives intends not to reinforce common findings, but to highlight the small nuances that might be overlooked.

Otherness as exoticization

Olivia's narrative has been already presented above. During her childhood and teenage years, she felt isolated because of being perceived only as "the Chilean refugee". At the same time, Olivia recalls feeling equally alone when her identity of "Chilean refugee" was being displayed as something exotic, both during her high school years, and also when she finally found a community with similar interests than hers.

> I don't know who had that idea, to be honest I would complain nowadays even after so many years, but in high school or so I ended up doing a sort of tour through all the schools in Varkaus with a Finnish schoolmate; there was a tour against prejudices, and I mean *all* of the schools in Varkaus, not only basic primary school but also *lukio* and *ylä-aste*, telling my story about being an asylum seeker, opening that wound over and over, and after telling my story it

> was also important I'd sit there and let all the Finns ask me things. Anything they'd like. **As if to say "hey, I'm a normal kid", and they could also ask my classmate, so to see that they were equal**. […]
>
> I eventually found these camps of Pinskut[173] and I eventually realised that in Varkaus I was isolated for being Chilean, foreigner, political refugee, but in the camps I was isolated because of the same reasons! In one I was discriminated but in the other I was exotiziced […] I think it was in that moment [when she realized that her Pinskut peers knew about Chileans politics and history] that I felt in love with the organisation because they knew about my history, which nobody knew about in Varkaus, so I was able to *forgive* a lot, but in that sense **I was also heavily isolated again because I was Olivia, the daughter of a political refugee**. (Olivia)

The fact that she was reified on account of a past that was politically interesting to her peers can be examined through the lens of *practical orientalism,* or the apparently innocent practices that reinforce the separation between the majority and the newcomer[174]. Needing a space in where she could be more than a political refugee, Olivia recalls that, back then, she made her first friends through online chat channels.

> So once while in the library, cause I loved to read, there were computers and I went online, I didn't know what I was doing but there were instructions, and I followed them and got the IRC, and I understood that's a space where people chat, and so I started there to chat, to talk. I found a channel that was interesting, named Tolkien, in where you could only write in English, so I learned a lot of English, I learned how to type super fast, **but there I also made my very first friendships, because in that place I was not anymore Olivia this and that, I was just myself there.** (Olivia)

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[173] Pinskut, founded in 1945, is an association for children, youth, and family. Even though the association is not affiliated to a political party, they define themselves as "vasemmistolainen mutta puoluepoliittisesti riippumaton järjestö", this is, "leftist but not independent of political affiliations". "Järjestö", Pinskut, accessed August 2, 2019, https://pinskut.fi/jarjesto

[174] Haldrup et al., "Practical Orientalism".

Olivia negotiated her Otherness by finding a space of her own. Just as before she claimed that "arrogance" allowed her to define her space, in here she realized that even positive discrimination made her feel isolated, and had to devise a space, again, to bring forward all her identities. This has also another reading: how coping mechanisms and, in general, strategies to handle Otherness, depend not only on the resources available, but on the context through which Otherness appears.

Summary

Up to this point, the analysis has shown narratives in where the characters of this thesis have recounted their Otherness in childhood, as well as their (unconscious or conscious) reactions to it. Loneliness, isolation, rejection, bullying, and exoticization brought in them heavy questionings of what constituted their identity: from their skin colour, to their personality, to the values that they brought along from the homeland. This part of the analysis has pinpointed three facts: (a) how important family support and social relations are, (b) how negotiations of Otherness have more to do with circumstances they encounter and therefore mechanisms attached to those, instead of it being related to *agency,* and (c) how the narratives are unique and quite personal. As the analysis progresses, unique will also be their negotiations of Otherness as adults.

5.2 Otherness now: adult reflections and negotiations

As premised in this research, Otherness is more than what meets the eye. After exploring recollections of Otherness in childhood, this section unravels and analyses those parts of the narratives which focus on adult reflections and show that after decades of living in Finland, feelings of Otherness do not come necessarily only from the outside, but also spring from nostalgias, curated processes of cultural selections, and ties with the homeland that narrators have woven in them consciously and unconsciously.

A dual Otherness in adulthood

After dealing with bullying during his primary school years, and after "choosing" to reject his *Colombianness* in favour of passing as Finnish, Bruno's Otherness is dual: on the one hand, despite having lived here for the most of his life, he is still constantly questioned about his background (with questions such as 'where are you from?'). He

also reveals that he is constantly addressed in English in public places. On the other hand, Otherness also comes from the fact that he has not once go back to Colombia. This has caused a profound disconnection that distances him from his birth country. Added to this, the relation with his distant relatives, that has become more frequent as technology advanced throughout these years, has made him realise that he does not feel a part of his extended Colombian family, at least emotionally speaking.

> Now I can say that Helsinki has become my home, I cannot either say I've lived in Cali because I remember Cali just a little bit… **and when they ask where are you from, I always say Vaasa [laughter]… and then they're like 'no, but I mean…'** and they start, they blush, and they think 'ok now I have to ask' and they don't know how to do it, 'no, is it your dad, your mom…?' and I'm like 'ah, yes, sure, I was born in Colombia'… they always think that is a Latino woman who moved here because of a Finnish man, and I'm like 'look, my dad is white and has green eyes, but…' (laughter) […]
>
> Yesterday I went to the movies with my friend, and when we went out of the cinema a guy came and asked her for a cigarette, in Finnish, and, you know where I'm going with this! and she points at me and says 'my friend gave it to me', **and the guy goes to me '*sorry do you have a cigarette?*'[175] and I replied *'joo kyllä'* […]** These things are funny now, before I would get upset about them, but right now, I mean, I have a good job, I have an apartment, I have my partner, we're moving together, I have my friends… I am really happy, so they can ask whatever they want. […]
>
> For example when I talk on the phone with them [with his Latin American relatives living in Colombia]… I don't like speaking on the phone with my family there, and my mom doesn't understand that. And I tell my mom, but… it's just that they talk to me like I'm 10 years old, like, they don't know me, and I just feel it's weird that someone says to me 'we love you so much' and I… I have to say the same and I… **I feel I just don't know that people.** (Bruno)

[175] In English in the original.

After living in Finland for twenty years, there are complicated manifestations of Otherness in Bruno: in Finland, it steams from an almost daily racialisation and profiling. On his Colombian side, Otherness is more subtle but equally present: he "does not know *that people",* his family.

> **I don't behave like them [Latin Americans living in Helsinki], I am not like 'oh let's party' every weekend** […] it is always noticeable that I don't belong to that group, and it's not because of them, it's because of me […] I remember once, when I was back then really shy about my weight, that somebody came and told me 'oh look how round his cheeks are!' and I back then thought 'what an asshole'. There's just an excess of camaraderie, I don't know, I don't wanna spend my time with someone, listen to their silly things, and still have to respect that person because we are a community, I'm just not like them. (Bruno)

> It's something that…that is so deeply rooted, so deep in my heart and my brain that I overlook it, but **when somebody asks me? I am Colombian, I am Cali**. It doesn't matter how Finnish I behave, or that I know how to speak with Finns and not with Latinos, none of that matters, I'll always feel Colombian. […] At home my mom is still really, really Colombian and when I visit her I demand for her to make me *empanadas,* she has to make me *arepas, buñuelos*. […]

As an adult, Bruno has made sense of his identity by following a process of self-identification that is informed by his childhood recollections, his relation with Colombia, and also by his relation to Latin American immigrants in Finland. Indeed, "intragroup comparisons are frequent and very important in describing oneself and defining one's place in society"[176]. Positioning himself outside the spectrum of Latin American behaviour (or what he considers this to be), while at the same time identifying as Colombian, points here at just one more demonstration of the fluid nature of identity. Bruno comes to terms with his lack of Latino "behaviours" by reaffirming himself in his

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[176] Maykel Verkuyten, "The Ethnic Self", in *The Social Psychology of Ethnic Identity", (*New York & Hove: Psychology Press, 2012): 239.

Colombianness at home and within himself; he also comes to terms with outer stereotypes of him by owning the physical space he inhabits.

Otherness as lack of roots

Coming to terms with one's complex identity, or learning to embrace an identity that is tied to the homeland, is not necessarily the case for everyone. In Iris' case, after enduring a difficult situation at home and after feeling completely outcasted outside the family environment, Otherness appears currently as a subtle lack of roots with her homeland, Peru. Even though Iris claims to not "reject" her Peruvian side, she identifies as completely Finnish.

> I feel Finnish. When I go to Peru I feel "super Finnish", which is a bit embarrassing because they even ask me where am I from because people immediately realise that I am like a tourist. […]
>
> I have realized I've become very Finnish, what I've taken from Finns is their honesty, I say things how they are, because in Latin America they do go around things a lot […] I think the moment in where I started feeling Finnish was when I got pregnant, because that's when I really realized that I have to defend myself, that I have to be visible. Back then my Finnish had improved, so naturally that also gave me more strength… **that's when I became a 'new Finn', when I stopped being invisible.** (Iris)

Iris' reflections present two points of analysis. Firstly, it is important to recognise that self-labelling (as Finnish, as Colombian, as Peruvian) "has a communicative function and can be a public statement"[177], and this is seen here empirically. If for Bruno being Colombian was attached to the home, to a core part of his identity, for Iris "becoming Finnish" has a specific function: to stand up for herself, to belong. Secondly, as seen here and in Bruno's narrative, the term "Latino" seems to serve as an umbrella for a complex intersection of culture expressions, habits, and race[178]. From both their views,

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[177] Verkuyten, "The Ethnic Self", 247.

[178] Ávila-Saavedra, "Ethnic Otherness versus Cultural Assimilation", 283.

Latinos are seemingly dishonest, as well as too frank. However, when negotiating the Otherness that steams from the detachment with the homeland, the construction of these images about Latin Americans has had two different outcomes. In Bruno's case, he is able to both feel Colombian yet purposely separate himself from what he considers Latino *behaviours*. For Iris, this is not the case. Even though she feels at ease inside her Finnish identity, she reveals that she has lost what she arrived with: it transpires in her narrative that she does not feel Peruvian at all, she does not hold a Peruvian passport, and she does not speak Spanish to her children. In order to understand that both outcomes are not only deeply personal but entirely valid, it is fundamental to point out that this Otherness in Iris is observed from a researcher's point of view; from a theoretical lens: Iris did not, at any point of her narrative, express discontent with having gotten rid of her Peruvian side. This gives material for reflection: is it necessarily a *good outcome* to feel the homeland permanently ingrained in the identity, even if this carries within trauma? What are the assumptions that academia makes about what constitutes Otherness?

As an example of the individual textures that oral history brings to light, this thesis shows that not all of the narrators followed even a similar journey from childhood to adulthood. Vera, who as a child negotiated her Otherness by "wanting to be blonde", and by having only Finnish peers, now as an adult reflects on how there is no value, for her, in being proud of her roots.

> Nowadays yes, I feel I could be a bit more Latina, recognise more that side in me… but to be honest, I am not interested. There's like a sort of trend nowadays in where as a woman of colour you have to be proud of yourself… that's just stupid, we are all equal, we all have the same problems, to me it's stupid that… for example in Helsinki there's a collective called *Ruskeat Tytöt.* They have good points, but in my opinion they're quite naive and they're fighting for things that do not exist in Finland […] I do not think that I've had less opportunities than others in Finland, or, there's the chance that it has happened, sure, but **I can't get stuck on that thought,** because if you start thinking like that you are sort of trapped in a vicious circle and you start hating everybody

> you know? […] So it's very important to recognise who I am, but **it can't be that I get all aggressive like 'I'm a proud Latina', well, proud of what?** you know, that's the problem here: I don't see myself neither white nor dark, you see? I per se don't think like that, I don't wanna think like that. [….]
>
> Of course I've thought "oh poor me, this and that" but as I said, that's when I was 7 years old, not 20, not 40 years old, so… So I've been an immigrant, I've felt that on my skin, **but either you become a victim or then you surpass it and you become normal**, and normal here does not mean like the others but it means you don't feed the stereotypes of 'these foreigners are always so angry'. […]
>
> **I think that all that 'brown pride' thing is negative, it's as negative as white pride**. And everybody is like 'I come from this place, I come from this region", well, what for? what's that gonna do? (Vera)

As well as with Iris, Otherness for Vera manifests in adulthood in a lack of roots; a complete lack of connection with her Latino or Mexican side. This presents two points of analysis. Firstly, while multiculturalism is understood as the cohabitation, respect and acknowledgement of several ethnic identities, "there are socially shared beliefs that argue for assimilation in where members of ethnic minority groups abandon their heritage culture"[179]. Vera expressed in her narrative that during her childhood she did feel Othered, but she chose to "not get stuck on that thought". The lack of space for negotiating her feelings on being different has given way now, decades later, to Vera understanding assimilation as the only possible path for a foreigner to "be normal" in Finland. Becoming "normal" is associated with not probing into the homeland identity, or not being "the angry foreigner". Secondly, Vera assures that she does not see colour nowadays; she also expresses that she does not remember whether she has been discriminated on the basis of her skin colour. Even though negating the presence or the

[179] Verkuyten, "The Ethnic Self", 235.

influence of racism can very well be a coping strategy[180], in Vera's case it appears to be a way of negotiating the wholeness of her identity, which differentiates her process from, for instance, Iris' process.

Otherness and exoticism; agency as negotiation

Reflecting as an adult, Olivia is still embarked on the process of negotiating the meaning that being Chilean holds for her. She still encounters Otherness in the form of her difference being presented as "exotic". This follows the same pattern as when in her childhood, on account of being "a Chilean refugee" she was made to tour Varkaus' schools and was made felt a "token" by her peer instructors at Pinskut summer camps.

> I feel good and bad when I go to Chile. **The fact of having come to Finland so young means that neither in Chile nor in Finland I have felt completely at home**. I always feel odd, and not adequate in both countries. Here, in Finland, there's a lot of things that I still find difficult, in the sense that I find them absurd, yet that happens also in Chile.
>
> For many years I was bothered with friends of my parents and I did not know it until a couple of years ago. It was that I felt, when I was with them, that I was a charity case, and that attitude sort of upsets me. It was like 'poor the Chilean girl, poor the Chilean family'. **There's still a lot of people like that, who want to get to know you because we have an interesting history, not because of who we really are**. I get really heavy and even rude, because there's certain people…they're not bad people, it's just that they do work with immigrants and they have tried to use me in that way [to share her story], and in certain circles of Tampere I have the reputation of being very rude and nasty, when they try to use me in that way, so when they ask me to come and share my story I say 'yes, it'll be 100 euros per hour, and from those I'll probably keep 20 because the 80 I'm gonna use them in therapy to deal with sharing my story' […]

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[180] Anna Rastas, "Miksi rasismin kokemuksista on niin vaikea puhua?", in *Puhua vastaan ja vaieta -neuvottelu kulttuurisista marginaaleista,* ed. Arja Jokinen and Laura Huttunen, (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2004): 40.

> In the Pinskut camps I was always ready to tell my story, because it was also an important story, in the sense that I wanted to spread the word about what can happen, about coup d'stats and about socialism. So I thought it was my duty to do it; it was my duty to tell my story to whoever would ask. But no, what I am doing now is differen**t. Now you asked me and I made the decision and I prepare beforehand, I make sure that the rest of the day I just relax** so I do not stay hooked on all these memories. But I've learned this only during the last three years. […]
>
> […] **I feel Chilean! I am Chilean without a doubt,** I feel a citizen of Tampere; Tampere is my city, is my home, but not cause I've lived for long here but because really this has been the place in where I've felt like home, in this place specifically, this town. But Finland as a country, no. (Olivia)

Even if Olivia experiences the same Otherness as when she was a child and a teenager, she makes sense of it by using the agency she has acquired throughout the years. Even when she is put in the same situation (for example, being contacted to talk about her "refugee experience") she is capable now, as an adult, to hold her narrative and decide the ways and the times in where she shares it. She has also gained agency in defining in very exact terms who she is: Chilean, and a citizen of Tampere, while remaining firm in her lack of Finnish identity.

Otherness as discrimination

After spending her childhood and teenage years in Vaasa, in where she constructed a self-narrative that was aided by her contact with other foreign cultures, Rosa moved to Helsinki in 2004. The current Otherness she narrates is perhaps one of the most salient for the immigrant population in Finland, regardless of how much time they have spent in the country. She reflects on frequent comments or encounters in public spaces which are openly discriminating towards foreigners.

> Once I was out with friends eating, and there were other foreigners in other tables, cause we were all coming from a hip-hop party, and in another table

there was a Finnish couple, and she goes and starts talking really badly about foreigners. So we immigrants started looking at each other, **and she started yelling to us, that she was supporting us with her Vero,** and so I went and said to her, 'look, I work more than you, and I pay more Vero than you, so when you go to the *terveysasema* it's me who's paying for that, so shut up'. (Rosa)

Look, if you go to Kamppi any day early in the morning the only ones you see there are foreigners, working, SOL, whatever, but foreigners. **All those who clean the train, foreigners, in the tram, the buses, foreigners, so don't you come and tell me that foreigners don't work**. In the university there are a lot of foreigners, you can't come and tell me then that foreigners don't study. (Rosa)

Even if it transpires in the narrative that Rosa does not consider herself Finnish, she positions herself in the same scale of citizenship as a native Finn. Openly, consciously, and firmly, Rosa rejects the particular discrimination that comes from racial slurs or accusations of "laziness". She negotiates Otherness by reclaiming the value of her work and how it contributes to society, and by resisting and reacting to discrimination. Rosa also reflects on whether she feels Finnish or Colombian.

(**…) So what does characterise me? What makes me Colombian, is it my way of dressing, my way of speaking? or is it only that I was born there?** […] People from some time ago already have stopped asking me directly where am I from, *mistä olet kotoisin* that's something they don't ask, they ask where are my roots from, where are my parents from, but not where am I from. So that's when you see reflected that a Finn does not see you as a foreigner, because I speak their slang, but also is the things I do: I love walking on the sidewalks, never skip a traffic light… you know. […] It's weird, I've been almost 17 years here and in Colombia I spent only 11, but anyhow I grew up here, I became what I am, but anyhow…when one travels, that's when one realises what one is, what culture you have inside yourself […] I cannot characterise myself as Finnish, because abroad for example either you say hi or

> you don't, and a Finnish won't ever say hi. I do, ok? I say thank you, a Finn wouldn't ever, I look at people in the eyes, a Finn wouldn't. **So I can say I am a Colombian in Finland.** (Rosa)

Individuals always attempt at making sense of themselves in context, this is, "meaning is always contextual and variable"[181]. Through this perspective is understandable that Rosa relates to what she considers "Finnish behaviours", which allow her to feels that she belongs, while on the other hand, as the context changes (if she goes abroad, for instance), she rather identifies with her Colombian identity. Rosa's identity appears as a blend, having spent a childhood in Colombia and her teenager years and adulthood afterwards in Finland. The way she negotiates the mixture of behaviours that come from two different places, or "homes", is by seeing the value in having both and taking what suits her best.

Otherness and "being in the middle"

Abel recalled his initial processes in Finland, of making friends and overall adapting, as a "rollercoaster". Even though being Finnish-Mexican allowed him to have useful knowledge in advance, he did still experienced loneliness. Now in adulthood, the sense of being "in the middle" still remains, especially when he tries to negotiate his ties with Mexico.

> (…) But yes, I've always faced those kinda questions of "why did you come here" or Latin American and Mexican stereotypes, and **to be honest the thing is I've always felt quite different. If I go to Mexico I'm the one who's half-Finnish, right? and here I'm always half-Mexican**. So to be 100% the same as others, I don't know how that feels. In a way it's pretty easy to be from here and from there, because you're always gonna be different. […]
>
> I feel a bit of both, but in a way… being Finnish does not require much work, so to say. Everything that surrounds you sort of imposes on you that world, that culture, that way of being, **but what takes more work is the Mexican side,**

[181] Verkuyten, "The Ethnic Self", 233.

> **right? […] But then there are certain points in your life, or, every time you go back to Mexico, there you feel your *Mexicanity*,** you feel that that part of your identity is very important, quite built-in. It's even ritualistic, if you will, for example not so long ago they opened a Mexican food store here in Helsinki, in Hakaniemi, and I was thinking that "I've been waiting 20 years for this, God has heard my prayers! [laughs] (Abel)

When Abel moved to Finland at the age of thirteen, he had already some connection with the country: his mother is native Finnish, he was raised bilingually, and he had visited the country in numerous occasions. His dual nationality has brought to him a permanent sense of Otherness, one that comes from external factors (stereotyping, or questionings of his background), yet at the same time from him, and the feeling of being always a "half". Throughout the years, though, his story shows a curve of learning when it comes to reflecting on his own Mexicanity, or rather, when it comes to accepting the fluidity of his identity.

Summary

The observation made in the previous part of the analysis when looking at the narrators' childhood recollections is confirmed here when looking at their adult reflections on Otherness: it is considerably hard to classify migrant processes. Specifically, this part of the analysis has presented one important reading: it appears as if Otherness does not cease to exist in the narrators' lives; instead, it takes different shapes, and it steams from different directions. As adults, their negotiation of Otherness seem to have a quality of agency. These negotiations, as well, are not only composed by reactions and reflections in regard to the external environment, but by careful internal thought processes.

5.3 Otherness and intersectionality

When doing narrative analysis, "recurrent themes are often embedded within different sorts of stories"[182]. This means that the repetition of important events which a priori are not part of the research cannot and should not be ignored in the analysis. In this particular case, even though the focus is Otherness within a *migration* process, various

[182] Phoenix, "Analysing narrative contexts", 75.

other identities came up constantly during the interviews, woven deeply into the narrative. These intertwined identities are developed in the narrative by "'orchestrating' the 'voices' within ourselves that speak from the different I-positions between which we shift[183]. This section of the analysis answers the second research question: why is an intersectional approach needed when looking at Otherness in immigrants?. As explained in section 1.1, this is a secondary research question, and therefore rather than conducting an in-depth examination of intersectional theory and intersectionality, this section attempts at drawing attention to *why* it would be relevant to use an intersectional approach when working with migration processes, and especially, Otherness.

The question is examined through three individual examples selected from the narratives. Besides "being an immigrant in Finland", the narrators of these examples presented other recurrent social identity that intersected heavily in their daily life, and therefore affected (1) how they perceived themselves and how they felt they were perceived by others, (2) the construction of their narratives, and more importantly for this thesis (3) their process in negotiating Otherness.

Vera

Vera moved from Mexico to Finland in 1989 at seven years of age. As analysed above, she struggled with her physical Otherness, "wanting to be blonde". Later on as an adult she does not see the value in maintaining her Mexican roots. Simultaneously, for Vera, her self-positioning in a socioeconomic scale vis a vis her classmates was an important marker of difference. In here, an intersectional look allows the researcher to "interpret individual level data within a larger socio-historical context of structural inequality that may not be explicit or directly observable in the data"[184].

> The first year [in Finland] I was in a French diplomat school, with children of diplomats, **which I wasn't, so I did not fit in there, see?** Parents there had like

[183] Michael Bell and Michael Gardiner, *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences,* (London: Sage, 1998), quoted in Buitelaar, "I am the Ultimate Challenge, 262.

[184] G. H. Cuadraz, and L. Uttal, Intersectionality and in-depth interviews: Methodological strategies for analyzing race, class, and gender, *Race, Gender and Class*, 6 no. 3 (1999): 156–186, quoted in Tech, "Intersectionality as the "New" Critical Approach", 175.

> a more elitist origin, with money, and we weren't rich, we had no money at all, **so it hit me hard the "I'm not rich", cause my friends were, they had money**. So you first have the "Im not like the others" physically speaking, but then that, "I'm not rich". […]
>
> (…) Yes, I felt different, but as I said… it was more like… **it was not so much the origins but the social status in where you were in**. Because I was in a school for rich kids, in where most of the people had a lot of money, so it was more of like your parents do not live in certain places, with a car, we didn't have any of that,… the difference was more in that sense […] But yes, I… I remember always thinking that I wanted to be tall, blond, with long legs and white skin. (Vera)

Being physically different and being different because of her socioeconomic status at first do not seem to correlate. However, as seen above both in the theoretical background and in the analysis, migrant children are quite aware of their surroundings, especially when initiating a new life in a different country. Added to this, whenever a person tells a story with intersecting identities, it is important to take into account that "these different I-positionings do not exist in a vacuum. They should be interpreted against the background of the social and cultural context in which they were developed in dialogue with others"[185]. For Vera, her Otherness as a migrant was *reinforced*, and deeply intertwined, with her socioeconomic position, or the one that she perceived to have. What the narrative reveals is a narrative of the embodiment of privilege: being rich, for Vera, materialised in a white body. If identity transforms according to the different ways we are perceived[186], class here was not only as a demarcator of economic difference between Vera and her peers, but it also exacerbated the already present feeling of Otherness that came as a result of being a migrant. Nowadays, Vera asserts in her narrative that she does not have any Latin American friends, and that, for example, the hair salon she owns is "not a Latino place, but is more sort of European; it has European vibes and roots". For further reflection, it would be interesting to explore

[185] Buitelaar, "I am the Ultimate Challenge", 264.

[186] Ibid., 261.

whether this adult negotiation of Otherness is a consequence of associating a Latin American identity to a lower socioeconomic position.

Olivia

Olivia, throughout her migration process as a political refugee from Chile, also existed in a fat body, in a society that consistently prioritised thin bodies. The migration experience, as well as family dynamics pertaining to it, got necessarily intersected with her bodily identity.

> I wasn't aware of how harmful it is to be exoticised or isolated, but all that damage was being done and eventually I ended up in the hospital. It's obvious that in one way or another one manifests what one is feeling, well I never said a thing, I never spoke about feeling discriminated, about the racism I felt, I didn't talk about those things, so I started eating alone, and vomiting. […] It became worse after I moved to Tampere and I ended up gaining about 40 kilos […] We never spoke about those things at home till the moment I ended up in the hospital, we had a *neuvottelu* so my parents could know that I was really bad, really depressed, so they asked them what do they think about the situation, and my dad starts crying, he starts saying that he believes I am really affected by all these years in Finland… he has the need for crying, he's been in prison, exiled, tried to escape… and he's never spoken about it, even if at home they've given us the possibility to talk, and also as a family we've tried on several occasions to have conversations as a group, but of course it didn't resulted in any good; after all there's many people with different kinds of traumas, just talking…with no guidance. […]
>
> **The first times I went to Chile I was a fat woman; the first time I weighed about 120 kilos, the second time 140 kilos**. I had problems with that but at the same time I never showed it, nobody ever hear me criticising my own body. I always had this attitude of not apologising for the appearance I had. And in Finland I had been discriminated, but **then I go to Chile and suddenly I realise that that's the attitude as well; they were telling me I needed to lose**

> **weight in order to find a husband!** And this was in 2006, I was still a beginner in feminism but still I felt independent, I did not have a problem with my composition […] My childhood girl friends in Chile were still living at home, and they weren't planning on leaving until they'd get married. …I didn't find my own circle, everybody I knew was either my family or my childhood friends, with whom I did not have anything else anymore in common, so I felt really unsuccessful, like a failure in that sense and in the sense that I was discriminated for being fat so I decided I would come back to Finland. (Olivia)

In Olivia's narrative, negotiating Otherness could be read as a process that steams exclusively from the migration experience: on account of that, she experienced loneliness, discrimination, and exoticisation. A deeper look, however, brings to light the fact that imbalances of power at a societal level (this is, Otherness experiences because of being fat) affected her positioning in her homeland. Being discriminated because of her body both in Finland and in Chile did not allow an inclusive space for Olivia to explore her Chilean identity in Chile, affecting therefore how she negotiated her migrant identity and in general, affecting her migration process. In this sense, intersectionality allows to "reveal how power works in diffuse and differentiated ways through the creation and deployment of overlapping identity categories"[187].

Bruno

The analyses above explored how as a consequence of being bullied at school, Bruno negotiated his feelings of difference by attempting at hiding, as much as he could, his Colombian identity. Furthermore, as it was also mentioned, Bruno never told his mother about the bullying suffered in the classroom, and instead "decided" to assimilate. His decision of not opening up at home was a conscious one, informed by the clash with another identity that at that time he found impossible to disclose openly with his mother. His identity as a homosexual man intersected crucially with his immigrant identity when negotiating manifestations of Otherness, and when defining his relation to Colombia.

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[187] Buitelaar, "I am the Ultimate Challenge" 262.

> I never told my mom they were bullying me in school, I mean, she didn't know and I think that up till this moment she doesn't know; our trust with each other wasn't…back then I was 10 years old, and you have already a sexuality, you're already feeling things and I felt really alone, so I couldn't talk to my mom because I always thought that if I say 'how are you' to her, she'd ask back 'how are you'. At 10 years old I feel I was like a 15 years old who's angry, silent, in his bedroom. […]
>
> […] Discrimination? Everyday, all the time, I think it's something that happens everyday… What's different is that now I know how to ignore, I know also in which moments I correct, in which moments I have to defend someone…But now to feel different is actually quite positive, but it wasn't in quite a long time, I think it started with 21, 22 years old when I came out of the closet and I told my mom about it. […]
>
> Sometimes I think 'which would have been the perfect time for me to go to Colombia and every time the result is the same: none, because before I was 19 years old I was in the closet, so even if I would've gone to Colombia people would have treated me even worse, as I imagine is the case for the whole of Latin America. I would have come back to Finland hating Colombia and the Colombians and what my city represents. After I got out of the closet, that was a period in where no, no way, I was so excited, so loud, they would've killed me there! (laughter) And after that, when I was already twenty-something…well, I was already me, I was already a grown-up, nothing could have influenced what I am. So it's always the same process. (Bruno)

In Bruno, the moment of "coming out of the closet" represents a key life event, a turning point in the narrative of his life[188]. His story cannot be understood, then, without looking at the structural social weight that a minority sexual identity carries: for him, being homosexual was a taboo that could not be mentioned at home, therefore making it impossible to also negotiate his feelings of Otherness as a migrant in a safe home

[188] Buitelaar, "I am the Ultimate Challenge" 262.

environment. A minority sexual identity also made it impossible to visit Colombia at any point, because of what homosexuality and the taboos attached to it represented in Latin America. Finally, coming to terms with homosexuality entailed for him coming to terms with his *Colombianness*: his narrative expresses that from the moment he opened up publicly about his homosexuality, he found it easier to negotiate his migrant identity, and therefore also easier to confront the manifestations of Otherness attached to it.

Summary

The three examples presented above signal how the category "immigrant" cannot either be understood as homogeneous, nor be treated and researched in isolation. This part of the research, besides illuminating on other identities that three of the narrators hold, demonstrate how these are inseparable from the migrant aspect of their lives. While analysis that discard material that does not relate to immigrant identities is informative and relevant, the complexity brought forward by looking at all the identities hold by one individual, and how these intersect, validates the reflection on whether an intersectional approach would give a more comprehensive understanding to first-person narratives.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this thesis was to explore Otherness in all its individuality: six narrators, who were born in Latin American countries and moved to Finland for different reasons as children, recounted their migration experiences through in-depth interviews. From those narratives, Otherness was extracted as a key factor in the construction of a new life: how did it manifest back then (and now), and what have been (and are) the mechanisms for coping, negotiating and resisting that the narrators have used? How has Otherness affected their self-identification processes? Furthermore, the research has offered empirical proof to answer a secondary question: why is it relevant to take an intersectional approach when looking at Otherness in migrant processes? This section outlines observations, findings, and conclusions, that are informed by a comprehensive analysis of the narratives, by a solid theoretical framework, and by the principle of individuality found in an oral history approach.

"***Every story is different", and the need for intersectional approaches***

Works of oral history attempt at lifting the voice of the people who indeed live, make, and tell the history that is being researched. In this study, the narratives allow to understand that in the new life of a migrant, manifestations and negotiations of Otherness deeply inform how the individual (re)negotiates identity after moving to the new country. Simultaneously, the narratives also confirm that negotiations of Otherness are intertwined and dependant on countless combinations of internal and external factors that the person experiences throughout the migration process.

In this small sample of six narrators, experiences and negotiations of Otherness are quite different. This offers a few readings. In the first place, it highlights key factors that conform the creation of a new life: the past in the left homeland, the family dynamics before and after arrival, the reasons for departing, the first friendships, and the encouragement received at home to keep the culture alive, among others. How one dimension intertwines with another gives way to different reactions, and offers (or takes away) resources to confront Otherness. Because of this, when studying Otherness and migration processes in general, both small and big dimensions of life must be taken into account. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that not only life circumstances need to be taken into account when looking at migration experiences, but also, an analysis of what other identities are at stake would translate into a richer reading. In the second place, the narratives have also brought forward stories of Otherness experienced both in childhood and adulthood, which have taken place *independently* of the narrators' own life circumstances: bullying, loneliness, exclusion, racism. This turns the focus to the following reflection: even though the consequences of Otherness deserve attention, equal importance needs to be paid to the root causes of it; in this case, a big part of these causes were found in the welcoming society. In the third place, the research joins the postcolonial theories[189] that advocate for a more complex vision of the migration process. Labels such as acculturation, or integration, seem to belong to the past.

Lastly, the fact that the narratives brought quite many different textures and particularities, creates space for reflecting on whether there needs to be a shift from the

[189] See for example Bhatia and Ram, "Theorising identity".

tendency to apply preexistent theories to social realities, towards first reflecting on those social realities (with the use of first-person narratives), and developing afterwards theories and practices from it.

The importance of family, and what could be learned from 'familism' dynamics

The fact that no two migration stories are identical does not imply that there are no common actors that affect the negotiation of new experiences, in this case Otherness. This research has demonstrated that family dynamics are incredibly important in negotiating Otherness, since they offer or deny a space for safe negotiation, and identity construction. For Olivia, the dramatic exile suffered by her parents made her suppress her own experiences at home. In Bruno's case his homosexuality intersected quite early with how much he could share the experiences of his other identities with his mother. For Iris, home equalled violence, and therefore was the place to escape from, and for Abel it was the place to connect and reconnect with Mexico, since as his narrative brings forward, Mexico and a Mexican identity were present at home at all times. For Vera, home *could have been* the place to foster a relation with Mexican traditions, but it was not after all, since she speaks of her parents relating more to an "euro-latino" identity. Finally, for Rosa, home was a place of crafting identity: throughout the joint negotiation of novelty between her and her mother, Finnish novelty and Colombian identity could meet and merge. This offers a reflection: given the pivotal role that family plays in the construction of a new life, what can be learned about the benefits of promoting and preserving healthy family dynamics during the migration process? These conclusions offer encouragement for practices that focus on supporting immigrant families as a whole, in order to aid individual identity construction processes.

Learning from the narrators' friendships experiences

The narratives reveal how important friendships with different backgrounds (or the lack of) are in the self-identification process, not only as children, but throughout one's life course. Bruno reflects on the consequences that the lack of diversity in his friendships had in his identity construction process.

> That's the difference between Rosa and me, when Rosa got into her school she had foreign friends, I didn't have any foreigner friends because I was the only one, I had only Marko… Rosa being with her immigrant friends they all have an accent, and Rosa still has it, and they ask me 'but have you lived longer than Rosa in Finland?' and I say **'no, the thing is that Rosa didn't stop being a foreigner, I did, in my mind I did'**. (Bruno)

As the interviews revealed, creating diverse friendships in terms of ethnic background seems to (a) allow to position oneself in a spectrum of diversity in where (despite discrimination) is easier to embrace one's own background and one's own difference, and (b) allow to become more aware of the richness of said diversity. Being surrounded by a multicultural background made it easier for Rosa to embrace her difference; it also helped when dealing with the rejection coming from her Finnish peers at school. In turn, being surrounded exclusively by Finnish peers made it more complicated for Vera to accept the multiple identities that one is allowed to develop as a consequence of migrating. Creating Finnish friendships who had a wide view of the world and a notion about political realities further than Finland's, made it also more manageable for Olivia to counteract the Otherness she was experiencing. The conclusion turns again into an observation that touches on the current reality that Finland faces: even if this research compiles childhood memories that took place during the 1990s, they also bring up adult reflections that include encounters with discrimination or plain racism nowadays. Moreover, in a school context, research[190] also shows that racism is very much present between children and teenagers. Parallel to this, many projects aimed at youth immigrant's integration are targeted only to them, this is, there is minimal effort or preoccupation with fostering diverse encounters[191]. The questions are: what is the effect for the Finnish counterparts to not get mixed with immigrant youth, and therefore constantly regard them as "Others"? Could and should integration practices insist in including also Finnish native youth?

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[190] See for example Rastas, "Miksi rasismin kokemuksista on niin vaikea puhua?".

[191] See for example the projects outlined for youth. "Lapsille, perheille, nuorille ja iäkkäille maahanmuuttajille suunnatut hankkeet", https://kotouttaminen.fi/lapset-perheet-nuoret-ikaantyvat, accessed October 13, 2019.

Final remarks: the fluctuating nature of Otherness, and the work ahead

The main observation that has guided this thesis has been that **"**migration processes are unique". In all the six narratives, however, Otherness has shown an everlasting quality: it does not disappear; it transforms. When negotiating Otherness as children, the family, the relation with the homeland, among other factors, have had great weight in developing coping mechanisms or tools for resistance. Because of this, it should not be assumed that children possess *agency* when negotiating Otherness experiences. As years passed, the narrators as adults still encounter Otherness, yet it has changed shape: it might come from within, from the homeland, from external encounters, or from reflections and self-positioning processes that they are capable of doing after years living in Finland. As adults, they have also acquired proper agency, this is, the capacity of deciding what to do with that Otherness.

Just as Otherness, as fluid as its nature is, remains in the lives and identities of the narrators, there is another stable element that has also been consistent both in past and present narratives: the Otherness perceived from the outside. A child was bullied, an adult is harassed on the street on account of their foreign status. A child was not invited to birthday parties, an adult is asked relentlessly the question "where are you from". This reads into the fact that as these immigrant narrators have come to terms with their difference, as they have come to understand their Otherness as richness, some of the native population seems in turn unable to assume diversity as the natural, healthy, and beneficial order of things. From this, there are two final reflections. The first one was brought up by one of the narrators.

> Now it's completely different, there's *mamu-luokka*, there's a million of possibilities. The problem, I feel, is that we are not yet ready here in Finland, now that we have so many refugees coming we think that yes, they need to learn Finnish immediately, *kotoutuminen* here and there… **however they don't realise all the past and background that the person has a and that needs to be taken into account.** (Iris)

As Iris expresses, it is paramount to look at processes of migration, and at Otherness specifically, with an individual approach, and through an intersectional lens. It is fundamental to understand that migration processes and feelings of "being different" are unique. Even though integration practices can not be tailored to infinite different cases, they should not be planned according to a sole category of "immigrant".

The second reflection comes from observing that the narrators of this thesis have consistently worked towards an understanding of what Otherness means for them, how they can confront it, and how they can incorporate it into their own identity. On the other hand, racism, discrimination, and ethnic profiling are still very present. If integration is defined as a "two-way process"[192], in where both newcomers and natives need to work towards an inclusive and diverse society, there seems to be a pressing need for developing diversity work that is targeted at the native population. It seems imperative to make, not only immigrants, but also native Finns, the target group of integration practices.

[192] "Integration is a continuous two-way process in which society is changing as the population is becoming more diverse and immigrants acquire knowledge and skills that they need in society and working life. This requires commitment on the part of the immigrants and the country receiving them". "Integration of Immigrants", Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, accessed on October 20, 2019, https://tem.fi/en/integration-of-immigrants.

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